1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

134 Lemu, pure white sand is found, a much more fertile soil as far as I can judge, which makes the country in the eyes of the native 'more beautiful' —by which he really means 'more useful'. Lastly, the low broken hills of Nupe are ferruginous, and on their slopes iron ore is mined by the natives.

VEGETATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

137 The geographical position of Nupe country makes it a typical area of transition from the southern forest belt to the arid savannahs of the north. Narrow strips or patches of thick rain-forest-like vegetation accompany river valleys and watercourses; but then, inland, we find a country of thin forest, shrub, and 'orchard-bush', alternating with beautiful open park-land, such as round Bida and Agaie, where intensive cultivation has cleared bush and shrub. The plant-life, again, reflects the geographical position of Nupe midway between north and south. Nupe is one of the northernmost countries in which the oil-palm is found, and yam and the southern variety of maize are cultivated; it is, at the same time, the southernmost habitat of the date-palm, the shea-nut tree, and millet crops. The trees and plants which are important for Nupe production and diet are these, in the order of importance. In the drier inland areas we find the locust-bean tree (*Parkia filikoidea*), in Nupe *lonci*; the shea-nut tree (*Bassia Parkii*), *koci*; the indigo tree or vine (*Lonchocarpus cyanescens*), *eci*, and indigo grass (*Indigofera arrecta*), *tsentse*; baobab (*Andansonia digitata*), *kuci* or *kuka*; silk-cotton tree (*Malvaceae*), *lembubu*; date-palm, *dobina*; and finally the mango, *mangoro*, a European importation. On irrigated land and in the thick groves near watercourses grow the oil-palm and other, less important, varieties of palm-trees, kola-nut tree (*Sterculia acuminata*), *ebi*, and banana, *yaba*. Only the kola-nut tree, the mango, and partly the banana are cultivated, all other trees growing wild. Nupe cultivation comprises the following kinds of crops and edible plants and roots: three millet varieties, bulrush-millet (*Pennisetum*), *mayi*, 'late millet' (*Spicatum*), *kpayi*, and guinea-corn (*Sorghum vulgare*), *eyi*; yam, *eci*; cassava, *rogo*; maize, *kábà*; ground-nuts, *guẓya*; rice, *jenkafa*; sugar-cane, *kpãsanako*; and onions, *lubasa*, in the river marshes; further sweet potatoes, *duku*; beans and ground-beans, *ezo* and *cdzu*; red pepper, *yaká*, and various kinds of greens which are eaten as vegetable. Of plants utilized commercially and in native industry cotton, *lulu*; henna, *lali*; hemp, *rama* or *egba*, 'rope'; and gourds, *ero*, are the most important.

241 In this enumeration of crops and plants of Nupe we have left the field of physical environment in the narrow sense. This rich and varied 177 system of cultivation reflects already a standard of civilization, technical achievement, and inventiveness of a people which has learned to master its environment. Some of the plants and crops mentioned have been adopted comparatively recently and introduced into Nupe from the north and south. As the Nupe names for hemp, henna, or cassava are borrowed from Hausa the plants themselves represent 'borrowed' cultural goods. The cultivation of onions was introduced into Nupe from

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

Hausa, and partly from Bornu, in historical times.[1] Nor is the cultivation of yam an original cultural possession of the Nupe, which is proved by two facts: first, that the Nupe north and east of the Niger are unfamiliar with certain important ways of preparing yam common in all 'real' yam countries, e.g. the drying of yam; and second, that yam, though to-day an important staple food, has still no place in their sacrifices, ritual meals, and first-crop ceremonies: only corn and millet may be used for these ritual offerings.[2] Cassava, finally, has only been introduced in the last thirty years; thirty years ago, I was told by a missionary, it was almost unknown in Nupe. Thus communication and culture contact have helped to mould the physical environment of to-day. This manifold agricultural system, however, could not have been evolved if the natural conditions of the country had not been favourable. The meeting of south and north in the vegetation of Nupe, the coexistence of marsh-land and savannah country, the natural irrigation and the strips and patches of thick forest, all this was as essential to the development of the productive system of the country as was the inventiveness and stage of civilization of its people. We cannot attempt to decide which factor, environment or civilization, has had the larger share in this development. The rigid distinction between environment and culture has long been abandoned as misleading and futile. For our investigation it is irrelevant. We can well regard the environment as it appears at present, the natural resources as they are utilized by the people to-day, as a unitary complex of factors the effect of which, upon the life and well-being of the people, we have to examine.

CLIMATE

Nupe, lower lying than any of the neighbouring districts, with its two big rivers, their dry, blazing sand-banks in the dry season, and their vast swamps in the rains, is one of the hottest and at the same time most humid districts of Nigeria. The river valleys especially, and the hollow in which Bida is situated, are damp, airless, and unhealthy. The following figures give the average temperature, humidity, and rainfall in Bida for 1933:[3]

TABLE 1

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*Apr.*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*	*Annual total*
Minimum temp.	60	70	72	72	71	71	68	68	68	70	70	67	..
Maximum temp.	93	98	102	103	98	88	92	90	85	91	96	96	..
Humidity (per cent.)	80	50	66	71	78	92	92	92	85	76	75	62	..
Rainfall (in inches)	2·99	..	..	1·99	3·06	12·33	15·41	13·82	11·87	2·29	0·32	..	66·08

[1] It is still practised to-day by the Bornu settlers of Kutigi.

[2] There is one exception: Mokwa, in the north-west corner of Nupe, where yam is sacrificed at certain annual rites. But the exception proves the rule, for Mokwa is the gate for cultural influences from Yoruba.

[3] This table was copied from the readings taken regularly in Bida Middle School.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

184 among the tribes on the southern bank of the Niger, and (a negative
771 evidence mentioned already) the *ndakó gboyá*, which is regarded as 'typical' Nupe by Hausa and Yoruba, is unknown among Dibo and Ebe. There are also other rituals and cults which cannot be assigned (at least not to-day) to a certain sub-tribe, and finally rituals and cults which represent the cultural possession of single village communities. In brief, the possession of a common cult means only an external uniformity of culture. None of these rituals implies co-operation and actual contact in the group at large. They are still but the expression of parallel, 'like', behaviour and not of concrete co-activity and 'togetherness'.

184 This is equally true of the other cultural features on which the cultural identity of the sub-tribe rests. The consciousness of a cultural uniformity is supported by the actual existing uniformity. But there is still no organized centre of co-activity behind this uniformity or behind the transmission of the consciousness of this uniformity. We can only say this: the sub-tribe, much more than the tribe, constitutes a potentiality of such co-activity and intensive 'togetherness'. The links of a common language, of similar economic pursuits, similar interests, parallel religious ideas, may grow easily into links of co-operation and 'togetherness'. Only in two cases, however, has this potentiality become reality—among the two sub-tribes Kyedye and Beni. In no other section are there contacts and forms of co-activity which make the sub-tribe 'one country', and its people 'one group'. How, then, does that cultural uniformity crystallize into the unified, conscious commonness of 'one country'?

184 I have described elsewhere the growth and organization of one of the
634 two sub-tribes which have evolved such unified structure.[1] Let me
177 repeat here the main facts. The growth of the Kyedye organization was the growth of a colonizing and conquering group. Expanding from one centre—Muregi, near the confluence of Niger and Kaduna—the Kyedye established themselves in the course of time all along the river banks. They built their settlements on the land of the aboriginal sections, Bataci and riverain Gbedegi, and claimed rulership over them. Twin villages arose, half Kyedye and half Bataci or Gbedegi, from which the Kyedye administered the district, assuming judicial authority and levying taxes. This colonization is still going on, and their rulership, rigidly centralized, is still alive and undisputed.[2] Close contact, intermarriage, and regular new emigration link the settlements, old and new, capital and colonies. Delegates from Muregi, relatives of the Kyedye chief, reside in the settlements, and these administrative 'posts' are correlated with the ranks which the delegates hold in the Kyedye hierarchy; promotion in rank involves promotion to a more important as well as more lucrative post. This closely knit ruling group precludes all permanent links between the cultural groups which this political development has thrown

[1] See 'The Kede: A Riverain State in Northern Nigeria', in *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, London, 1940, pp. 165–95.

[2] Only twenty or thirty years ago have the Kyedye established themselves on the river Kaduna, or on Jebba Island, a place which had only then become of economic importance.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

184
634
177

together. There is no intermarriage, and almost no cultural give-and-take; to-day the Kyedye are Mohammedans (or semi-Mohammedans), but the Bataci and Gbedegi have remained pagans. Yet in one significant field cultural unity has evolved, over and above the differences of culture, tribal origin, and social status, and over and above also the co-operation embodied in the political structure. With the political rulership the Kyedye have assumed spiritual authority as well; myths and sacred insignia confirm the position of the *Kuta*, the Kyedye chief, as the ruler over the whole riverain area and its people; and two most important sacrifices to the river Niger, which secure large catches and safety from floods, the *ketsá* and *ndáduma*, are linked with his person and office. Every new appointed *Kuta* will send one of his near relations to Jebba and Buka, the two places where these sacrifices are performed, with two white bulls to be sacrificed to the river spirits by the priests of these cults. By these sacrifices the chief secures 'greatness' for himself, and success and welfare for his subjects.

The Beni organization presents an entirely different picture. Unlike the Kyedye system it exists no longer; it was broken and destroyed by the Fulani conquest. It took the form of a confederacy formed by the twelve 'towns' of the Beni: Bida, Tafiẽ, Esã, Doko, Towagi, Egbe, Gaba, Nupeko, Eda, Panjuru, Ewu, Yesã. The political bonds were twofold: the twelve towns recognized the supremacy of one town, and paid a small tribute to its chief, or 'town-king'; further, in case of war, the twelve towns were bound to fight together and to support each other, again under the leadership of one town.[1] Mythology, and the existence of certain common sacred insignia of the twelve town-kings of Beni, supply the spiritual background for the political unity. Moreover, the *gunnu* cult, this most important religious cult of Nupe, appears among the Beni in a special form, namely, as a cult which utilizes comprehensive co-operation between the priests of the whole country, thus underlining, in the religious sphere, the unification of the sub-tribal section.[2]

One might ask why it was that just these two sub-tribes evolved a comprehensive political and cultural unit. The origin of the Beni confederacy is hidden in the dim past of a Nupe of which we have no records. As regards the Kyedye we can, to some extent, answer the question. In the environment of the river valley, and in the pursuits of a riverain people, lies the germ of territorial and political expansion. Long fishing expeditions, an extensive river trade, on which the livelihood of this riverain group depends, demand extension of political influence as security for the very wide area of their economic activities. Trading-posts become political outposts, and fishing colonies become strongholds of territorial expansion. The spirit of adventure and enterprise, finally, which alone could have built up this efficient organization, is part of the life of this riverain people.

Of the enterprising spirit of Kyedye chiefs, born colonizers and

[1] This chief town of the Beni seems to have been Tafiẽ till the Fulani conquest; after that the headship passed to Bida, till it disappeared finally with the absorption of the Beni confederacy in Nupe Emirate (see p. 82).

[2] See *J.R.A.I.* lxvii, 1937, p. 98.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

pioneers, the history of the Royal Niger Company can give many instances. But let us read these examples correctly. They show, first, that political integration tends to widen its basis so as to embrace all spheres of cultural activity; political unification calls into being other forms of contact and co-activity, and thus cements its own unity with the help of a more comprehensive and more intimate 'togetherness'. But these examples show also that the creation of such co-activity and togetherness does not simply follow from the potentiality of cultural uniformity. In the case of the Beni confederacy cultural uniformity appears intensified into co-activity and togetherness; among the Kyedye the political fusion of different sub-tribes, different cultural areas, created the wider area of co-activity and common life. Obviously, the nature of this co-activity and common life is different in each case. The commonness that grows from uniform culture and the commonness that is superimposed upon a cultural diversity represent two different social realities. What we have said above of the links of cultural uniformity which 'grow easily into links of co-activity and togetherness' was not, therefore, quite correct. We have before us not a simple quasi-automatic process of 'growth', but two specific, alternative forms of social development.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

565 517 184 people of Bida professional women singers, accompanied by their own drummers, perform for an audience which pays for its pleasures. The uneducated pagans like to sit together on afternoons and evenings in front of their houses, chat or weave mats, or just enjoy the peace of these hours of leisure. The educated Mohammedans meet in the house of a Mallam and read with him the holy books of Islam, using even their leisure hours for furthering their education.

565 291 184 As regards dress: a man of standing would always, even in the privacy of his home, wear trousers and the flowing white robe, and would never appear before guests and strangers without turban. Peasants and commoners normally wear a loin-cloth and a blue cloth thrown over the shoulder, and the blue Phrygian cap which is said to be the traditional head-gear of Nupe. Only on state occasions would they don robe and turban.

565 177 184 304 195 People of rank have adopted, with Mohammedanism, many features of Hausa culture. In their families the Hausa custom of removing the uvula of small children is practised—a custom absent among the lower classes and unknown among the peasants. They are fond of using Hausa words and phrases; for expressions concerning the delicate topic of sex they invariably use Hausa or Arabic circumlocutions. They despise the peasants and uneducated people of the lower classes who use the crude literal expression, and who cannot embellish their speech with the more elegant phrases borrowed from Hausa.

565 184 The various features enumerated above are clearly not of the same order. Characteristic though they are of the standards valid in the different strata of Nupe society they are not equally reducible to the central facts of class structure—political and economic conditions. The evaluation of certain habits as inferior or superior is as much a matter of convention as a result of social or economic inequality. That the poor man cannot afford meat or chicken-and-rice is due to his poverty; but the preference for milled or unmilled grain or for palm-wine or sorghum-beer respectively, is a matter of taste and habit, i.e. a 'cultural' trait pure and proper. Yet rendered permanent by education, linked with habitual group-behaviour which in other, more vital, spheres of life positively reflects economic or social prerogatives, these smaller traits, too, gain the significance of class-determined behaviour. Here we grasp another aspect of class differentiation. I have said that where the attribute of inferiority or superiority is disregarded, differences of habit and living conditions in general are reduced to cultural differences in the narrow sense. This gains special significance in a society like Nupe, which has grown out of a conglomerate of various tribal groups, each with its own more or less specific culture. Some of the food habits of the 'poor' peasants are indeed the original food habits of cultural groups which have been incorporated into the kingdom. I have mentioned that the Phrygian cap, worn by peasants and commoners, is regarded as the traditional head-dress of the country. Their 'uncouth' manners, their 'primitive' customs, are part of the pagan peasant culture of the country. Similarly turban and flowing robes, or the appreciation of professional musicians and Mohammedan learning, reflect the preferences of a specific cultural

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER X

GOVERNMENT IN MODERN NUPE

OFTEN in the foregoing description I have used the present tense as if the Nupe kingdom of pre-British days still existed. True, this was to a large extent an historical chapter; yet it described a development the results of which are still valid and still mould society to-day as they moulded it thirty, fifty, or even a hundred years ago. I was not merely reconstructing dead events and past phases. The Nupe kingdom and its society still exist, not only very vividly in the memory of the people but to a very large extent in concrete reality. This is not denying the force of social changes, but stressing the tenacity of a social structure that survives although its contents have changed materially. The recent economic and political changes have affected fundamentally the 'contents' of the social life of the country, the main interests and incentives round which it revolved. There are no more wars, raids, and conquests; slaves and feudal fiefs exist no longer. But ranks and titles and state offices linked with ranks and titles, still exist. Slaves have turned into *bara* or Native Administration officials; fiefs into administrative districts in the charge of royal princes. That the framework of the political organization could survive almost unchanged is in large measure due to the Administration of Nigeria under Indirect Rule and its tendency to utilize as far as possible the traditional social system. But a stronger proof of the tenacity of the Nupe social system is the fact that where the Administration had departed from it and tried to make way for a new development the old trend broke through, undeflected.

Two years ago the Administration built a new official residence for the *Etsu* Bida, with a brick wall, an imposing tower, a garage, and a flower garden—an emblem of modern Nigeria. Incidentally, for all its modernity the new house is but a replica of the hereditary palace of the Nupe kings, with special *katamba* for the *ena Ndeji* and *ena Maiyaki*, for *gitsiki* and *bara*, the *ena mandi*, the men of the *Etsu Dogari*, and the summoners who come to wait on the *Etsu*. Now, this new house was built on 'neutral' ground, outside the town gates, as a symbol of the Government's intention to break with the division into three royal houses, which the Government considered harmful to the unity of the country.[1] The Administration believed itself to have overcome successfully the opposition of the late *Etsu*. An old and sick man, he was reported to have said—and his words were all over Bida—that he had agreed to the new site only because he knew he would not have to live in the new house. Which was true enough—he died before the building was finished. But the new *Etsu*, who willingly took up his residence in the splendid new house, one day surprised the District Officer by demanding that his 'proper house' in Bida, in his 'own' part of the town, should be put in repair at the expense of the Native

[1] See p. 93.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

Administration. New house or old, in his mind the position of the Emir remained inseparable from that traditional personal link with the local town faction.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE EMIRATE

Let me describe the modern Government of Nupe Emirate, in official nomenclature, the Native Administration (N.A. for short) of Bida Division.[1] Out of the multitude of traditional ranks the modern Emirate has taken a certain number and embodied them in the N.A. as official posts, carrying a salary and to some extent also implying specific, new tasks. The salary is graded in accordance with the importance of the office, and the *Etsu* himself heads this new bureaucracy with a salary of £2,000.[2] The *Etsu* Nupe is still elected from the ranks of the royal princes by *gitsúži* and *sarakiži*, or more precisely by those *gitsúži* and *sarakiži* who hold appointments under the N.A. The *Etsu*, assisted by a council of four, looks after the affairs of the Emirate; he watches over law and order in the country, carries through measures of administration, tries certain legal cases, and controls appointments to offices and titles. Advised and guided by the District Officer in charge of the Division, the *Etsu* is the responsible head of his government. The agreement of both *Etsu* and District Officer is necessary for every administrative measure.[3] The appointment of a new *Etsu* is subject to confirmation by the Governor of Nigeria, and in extreme cases the Governor may depose the Emir on the advice of the District Officer and his superior officer, the Resident of the Province. The *Gabi Seidi*, formerly the head-slave of the *Etsu*, is to-day the official messenger between the Emir's residence and the Divisional Office.

The *Etsu*'s council consists to-day of the following members: the *Ndeji*, *Maiyaki*, *Nágya*, and *Etsu Tafiẽ*. The *Ndeji*, the old 'Father of the Town', is the 'president' of the council. The *Maiyaki*, from a 'Minister of War', has become a 'Minister of Public Works' and a representative of the *Etsu* on tours of inspection. The *Nágya*, a royal prince, was formerly District Head of Mokwa, and was then co-opted into the council for the ability which he had shown in the administration of his district. The *Etsu Tafiẽ*, finally, was taken into the council in 1931, after the Bida disturbances, as an official representative of the *talakawa* (this is the Hausa form of *talakaži*, commoners), who formerly had no voice in the management of state affairs. I may say a few words about this appointment. Justified as was its aim, the appointment itself seems rather problematic. It was justified officially on the grounds that the

[1] The Administration of the other Provinces and Divisions where sections of the Nupe tribe are living is organized on identical lines; we may disregard them here.

[2] These were the salaries of the *Etsu* and the higher officials of the N.A. in 1934–6: *Etsu* £2,000; *Ndeji*, *Maiyaki* £180; *Nágya*, *Etsu Tafiẽ* £120; District Heads £150; Chief *Alkali* of Bida £180.

[3] No fixed rule can be laid down as regards the relative share of responsibility and initiative in this co-operation of District Officer and Emir. It varies considerably with the personalities of these two men, and also with the general trend of policy that might obtain in the Province at a given time.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

however, to give them up as soon as the former owner or his heir may return, even if he had been absent for a longer period than three years—the period of absence stipulated in the village. I have heard of no dispute that has ever arisen over these house-plots, either in the village or in Bida town.

Strangers as Settlers

From the land which the chief holds in trust he apportions land on request to strangers who come to settle in a Nupe village and equally, as we have seen, to natives of the village who, through long absence, have forfeited the claim to their family land. The procedure is the same for both. It is interesting to examine these regulations, especially because this form of granting land implies a previous adoption of the applicant into a local household. Generally speaking, the Nupe like strangers—respectable strangers—to settle in their villages. This fact reflects both the lack of pressure on the land and the attitude of a commercially highly developed country which is ready to welcome new citizens, very likely people who bring with them new techniques and new valuable knowledge.[1]

The stranger who decides to settle in a Nupe village will first stop for some time in the house of a family head, perhaps a friend, or friend of a relation, who is ready to accept him as a temporary member of the household. Be it a short or prolonged stay, strangers will never be expected to pay for their 'lodgings'. A small present of food or kola-nuts is the only compensation. The guest will keep his own *ménage*. But after a time he comes to be regarded as an adopted member of the house, and then it is time to make his request for land and a site for a house of his own. This request will always be done through the *emitsó*, the Owner of the House, who will bring the case of his guest to the notice of chief and elders. The *emitsó* will have to vouch for the character and reputation of the applicant—a bad reputation would invariably lead to a rejection of the application. The procedure (which varies slightly in different places) is this: a preliminary gift, called *emisa*, 'salute', consisting of ten to twenty kola-nuts, a fowl, a calabash of beer, or—more rarely—money, accompanies the formal request to the chief. Another gift of kola-nuts is made later to the chief's representative (one of the elders), who will go with the applicant to stake out the farm-plot and the site for the house, and who may become later an important witness if any dispute should arise. Now the new landowner sets to work. For two to three years he is exempted from tax. Then, when the crops have been good, he pays his first *dzankú*, not yet to the chief himself, but to the family head in whose

[1] We have mentioned evidence of this already, e.g. the Bornu settlers who have introduced onion-growing into Kutigi, or the Yoruba-Konú who introduced weaving and indigo dyeing in Yoruba fashion. At the hearing of a court case—it was a rather involved dispute over a house in Kacha that had been 'sold' by the late owner in order to obtain money for tax arrears (the only case of this kind that has ever come to my notice), as a result of which his widow had now no place to go to—the *Etsu*'s Court officially recommended that 'strangers should always be adopted into one's household and given a hut to live in'.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

northern, humped, breed. They were humpless and of small build, evidently related to the dwarf cattle which exist to-day in certain areas in eastern and south-eastern Nigeria. These dwarf cattle are said to have been very widespread in eastern and northern Nupe country before the Fulani conquest; the Gbari, for example, maintain that they had owned, originally, large herds of these cattle which, to-day, have almost disappeared in this region. The traditions of Nupe speak of a magic connected with a bull or a cow with which the ancestor-king Tsoede endowed the first Beni chiefs. The *hetsd* ritual on the Niger river demanded the sacrifice of a bull, to be presented annually by the chief of the Kyedye. Evidently, these rites and sacrifices could only have referred to these dwarf, pre-Fulani cattle. Anyhow, there is no evidence that cattle have ever played any important part in the economy of the peasant areas, and possibly in the whole pre-Fulani kingdom.

The disappearance of cattle, however, from the Fulani-Nupe, and from the households of the rich, demands explanation. No doubt the 'great trouble' has played some part in this change. With the disappearance of slavery the problem of finding suitable and sufficiently cheap labour presented an additional difficulty. But the decision to abandon cattle-keeping was also due to a decided change in the attitude of the people towards this commodity. The herds of cattle were, in a word, capital. The Nupe do not live on the cattle, basing their diet on milk and butter, as the Fulani and other cattle people do. Nor are the cattle in Nupe linked to a whole system of religious beliefs, taboos, and ceremonial usages. The *Etsu* of Agaie (on whose herd I could examine these questions in detail) occasionally sold one or two head of cattle when he was in need of money—this was the only concrete use to which he or any of the Nupe cattle-owners would put their cattle. I cannot judge how far status and prestige may have formerly entered into this assessment of the value of cattle. I gathered that it could not have been of much significance; the possession of horses counted for much more. But the existing incentives to possess cattle must have been further weakened, and even reversed, by two changes in the present-day economic situation. First, by the enormous rise in the price of cattle, especially in the countries south of Nupe, which came with the increased (European and Europeanized) demand for meat and skins. Second, by the appearance of new means of economic enterprise, and the prospects of more profitable, large-scale trade, which necessitated a more liquid form of capital. It is a fact that a large number of rich cattle-owners soon sold their herds, attracted by the high price, and also realizing most probably the greater advantage that, under modern conditions, lay in transforming their stock into ready money.

This tendency to keep the capital 'liquid' is shown also in the readiness of the Nupe to experiment with different kinds of live stock. Thus we find here and there—and the same thing is reported from Nupe a hundred years ago—ostriches, which the Nupe buy from traders from the north, feed and tend and finally sell again with a profit. An enterprising chief had even taken to breeding horses; it was done on a very small scale, and was in Nupe an isolated case, but still characteristic of

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

diameter, they are built of clay, with strong, thick walls. Over the dome-like top a grass roof is placed as protection from sun and rain. The granary is raised above the ground, resting on stones or solid blocks of clay, to make it safe from termites. On one side, a little above the middle, is a rectangular opening which can be closed completely with a clay lid. At the beginning of the rainy season you will see the people everywhere busy repairing their granaries, or building new ones, which are to take the new crop. Later, when they have been filled, the lid is closed, and the granaries then left until their contents are required for food or sale.

Millet and sorghum are stored unthreshed, in whole heads. They keep remarkably well in these granaries. The method of storing unthreshed grain ensures a certain measure of ventilation and also prevents the grain from being packed too tightly in the granary, and thus becoming damp and mouldy.[1] As already mentioned, late millet and sorghum are left to dry on the fields for a few days before being taken home to be stored. Bulrush-millet, which is reaped during the rains, may have to be dried in special roast ovens before it is fit for storing. These ovens, *yaku*, which are used for various purposes besides the drying of millet—soap-making and the drying of shea-nuts—are built of clay, of roughly cylindrical shape, about 5 feet high and 3 feet wide, and are divided into half horizontally by a sieve-like grill. The bottom part of the oven takes the fuel (firewood), the upper half, which is open at the top, is the receptacle for the stuff to be dried or roasted. Frequently a small grass roof is put up over the oven to provide shade for the women working there. Every Nupe village possesses a large number of these ovens. They are placed outside the compounds, often on the outskirts of the village. They are not the property of individual households, but are built by the men of the village or village section in collective work, and used by the women—the drying and roasting being their work.

The seed plants are as a rule at once divided up from the crop. The seed yams are stored on the farm—unless yam is planted immediately after the harvest. The heads of millet, sorghum, and maize which are later to supply the seeds are stored, not in the granaries, but in the hut of the family head, where they are kept on a shelf of bamboo or wood underneath the roof.

The crops undergo no further treatment during the time of storage. As mentioned already, the Nupe do not dry yam.[2] Sorghum and millet are not threshed until the grain is being prepared for cooking or sale, although heads of unthreshed grain, packed in large bundles, are also offered for sale on the markets. The threshing is done in the courtyard

[1] This is actually the almost universal method of grain storage in Northern Nigeria. An indirect testimony to its efficacy I chanced to obtain from Hausa settlers in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan whom I had occasion to visit in 1939. Chiefly for lack of proper building material for the construction of the Nigerian type of clay granary, these settlers have adopted the Sudan method of storage, i.e. storage of threshed grain. They all agreed that this method was inferior to the Nigerian, and preserved the grain much less satisfactorily.

[2] It is interesting to note that the Nupe colonies in Yoruba country and the Nupe communities which are living side by side with Yoruba communities in Ilorin Province have adopted the drying of yam.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

But as even the purest native-made soap can hardly compete with imported soap it is not surprising that soap-making is gradually disappearing, and has disappeared completely in Bida and the more progressive villages, such as Kutigi or Mokwa.

Indigo

Indigo, *eci*, is gained from two different plants, the indigo grass (*tsentse*) and the indigo tree (*eci* or *baba*). The grass grows wild in the thinned-out bush that surrounds most Nupe villages, but is also cultivated in some parts (e.g. Mokwa) and grown as a first crop before millet-sorghum.[1] The dye is gained from the decomposed grass which, after having been cut, is left lying in the open for from two to three months. The powder which is obtained by this method is mixed with ashes and placed in a sieve-like basket. Water is filtered through, and this gives the dye, which is allowed to drip directly into the deep clay-cemented dye-pits (called *marina*, as in Hausa). This technique of dyeing follows the Hausa fashion; and in Nupe as in Hausa the dyers, who also manufacture their own dye, are men.

The indigo tree is found scattered everywhere in the open bush, most densely in Trans-Kaduna. In the district between Kutigi and Sakpe we find even something like indigo-tree plantations which are tended by another group of 'tree-experts'. Here every village possesses large numbers of indigo trees, which are to some extent cultivated, i.e. cut and thinned out when necessary; they are not, however, planted or transplanted, but left to fertilize themselves. Among these indigo planters the making of indigo is men's work. But in the districts where indigo is gained from the scattered, wild-growing tree, the picking and preparing of indigo is done by women. The method of preparing the dye is in both cases the same; the leaves are pounded in a mortar, then left to ferment in water, mixed with ash, and finally rolled into balls. The finished product is used exclusively by the women dyers, that is, in a practice of dyeing in pots, and which appears to represent the original dyeing technique of Southern and Central Nigeria; according to Nupe tradition it was introduced into the country by the Konú weavers and dyers (see p. 188, n. 2).

Nupe country offers only a restricted market for indigo. The indigo manufactured by the wives of the Konú weavers, the total quantity of which is small, is either used by the women themselves or is sold in the markets—in the districts more than in Bida—where modern products have ousted almost completely the native technique of dyeing. The much larger output of indigo dye which is produced by the cultivators of the indigo tree is disposed of with the help of middlemen who trade it to Yoruba, the most favourable market for indigo, or is taken by the producers themselves to the nearest market of that country (Ilorin). This latter method secures the better price but may interfere with the normal agricultural activity. A family of farmers near Kutigi who

[1] This method of indigo cultivation is practised on a large scale by the Gbari.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

owned twenty-five indigo trees had to take their produce to Ilorin market just at the time of the second yam harvest. However, they preferred to sell indigo first and to postpone the digging out of yam for a month or two, although this meant losing the always profitable market for the first yams of the season. The element of economic calculation, to which we have already assigned its place in the planning of Nupe agriculture, reveals its efficacy in this new context as well.

Not much need be said about the other fruit-bearing trees. The fruit of the mango tree is eaten when and wherever it can be picked or gathered up from the ground; it is not traded—like the banana it is 'just fruit'. The tender young leaves of the baobab (*nnuci*) are used as food; they are pounded and sold in the markets as a vegetable which is added to soup and meat. In order to obtain the tender leaves the owner of the tree lops the big branches so as to make them sprout new leaves. The cotton-wool-like kapok which is contained in the capsules of the silk-cotton tree (*lembubu*) is traded in one or two markets of the country; it is bought by the Bida cushion-makers and also by the canoe-men on the Niger, who use its fine fibres to stop leaks in their canoes. The commercial use of this tree and its fruits has not yet penetrated into the more remote districts: while in Kutigi, on the main road, natives were collecting kapok to sell it to the Bida cushion-makers, I found in Sakpe, only ten miles away but right in the bush, the cotton-wool left unused, lying on the ground to be carried away by the wind. When I asked a number of men why they did not collect it and take it to the market—I could call upon a boy from Bida whom I had with me to bear out my contention that this stuff possessed commercial value—they replied, not wholly convinced, that it would be too hard work. Another example of rudimentary 'economic calculation', with leisure weighed against money-profit.

INNOVATIONS IN PRODUCTION

From this discussion an interesting question arises: why have the Nupe, who have mastered the cultivation of kola-nut and banana, not taken to the cultivation of other trees as well, but left most of their fruit-bearing trees to the 'care of God'. If you ask a Nupe farmer he will give you one of two answers: either the vague theological excuse that God has planted the trees, and that God will look after them; or the more rationalistic but no less acquiescent explanation: 'If I planted a tree I should never see its fruit, only my grandchildren would profit by it. Our grandfathers have not planted trees for us, why then should we plant for our grandchildren?' The fact, well known to everyone, that the Kusopa plant and cultivate trees is yet easily dismissed. This is one of the cultural features typical of certain tribal sections which are simply taken for granted by the other groups. The myth that explains how it came about that just this and no other sub-tribe happened to become kola-nut planters, the special magic which the members of that sub-tribe are believed to own provide the spiritual background for this attitude. This acceptance of an existing productive specialization as if it were a final and unalterable fact was effective enough, as we have seen,

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

to check the attempts to extend kola plantation in Nupe. Whether or not it will check other attempts at agricultural innovations one cannot say.[1]

Often in discussions of this kind the reluctance of a native group to adopt a certain innovation is summarily dismissed as being due to the inveterate, almost proverbial, 'conservatism' of the native races. Clearly, such an explanation does not meet the case. As regards the Nupe we should have to contrast their alleged 'conservatism' with respect to trees with the readiness with which they adopt new crops and agricultural techniques. Evidently, to adopt a new crop which shows results in a year's time, and which is easy to tend, often easier than the traditional crops (as in the case of maize or cassava), and to take up the difficult work of planting trees which may not bear fruit for six or seven years, is an entirely different thing. One can be easily fitted into the framework of established agricultural activities while the other involves a complete readjustment of the productive system. The Nupe are, within limits, extremely progressive people, and keen on trying out new things. These limits are determined by two factors: first, by the time that an ordinarily crowded working year could allow for additional tasks; other work, or precious leisure time might have to be given up for the sake of the innovation—a change that may or may not appear worth while to the Nupe farmer. The second factor is the measure of change which a readjustment of the native production would entail in this closely knit economic system, with its exact balance of specialization and exchange. Every radical change in the production, such as the adoption of tree-cultivation in a district, may upset this balance; it may, in other words, make the innovation less profitable. The fact that the Nupe farmer is go-ahead with respect to certain farm techniques and 'conservative' with respect to others is not due to any tribal or racial 'conservatism', but reveals itself as a clear instance of the working of free economic choice.

TECHNIQUE AND KNOWLEDGE

So advanced a technique and so conspicuous a standard of husbandry must involve a body of theoretical knowledge which goes far beyond the counsels of peasant lore, and could avouch statements of very nearly scientific authority. This is no doubt the case in Nupe farming. The understanding of the basic principle of manuring, the fixed rules with regard to rotation and lying fallow, the practice of thinning-out the growing plants, which is correctly explained as being intended to give the plant more space, they all confirm this.[2] Moreover, while in many African

[1] Rev. Ira W. Sherk, the head of the U.S. Mission at Mokwa, has been successful in making the people of a small neighbouring village adopt the cultivation of grapefruit. This innovation, carried out on a very small scale, and involving hardly any difficult readjustment of the native productive organization, bears out what is said later in the text about the limits that are set to all such innovations.

[2] I must record that one of my Bida informants, an experienced farmer, denied the value of ashes and the burning of fields as manure. He held that animal manure (with the regular use of which he as a Bida farmer was well acquainted) was the only effective manure. This critical attitude only emphasizes the element of empirical knowledge in Nupe farming technique.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

241 463 the person who is destroying his abode. These big trees have a money-value, and are sold to the wood-cutters and carpenters, who use the timber in their own industry. On the whole the Nupe are reluctant to cut down big trees, especially in the town, for they appreciate the shade which they give. But it happens occasionally that the owner of a barren tree, in need of money, has it cut down and sells the timber to wood-cutters or carpenters.

185 651 322 In the interest of forest-preservation the felling of certain trees has been made subject to the payment of a licence fee varying in amount from 5*s.* 6*d.* to £1 or more. This new rule involves an economic re-adjustment which the people—professional timber-workers as well as ordinary farmers—have not yet been able to achieve. The carpenters of Bida almost went on strike when the new licence was introduced, and refused to manufacture any more wooden stools and other products of their craft for fear of being unable to sell their goods for the higher price which the licence would necessitate. Another illustration is the case of [672] an old man, a carpenter, who, unaware of the new rule, had bought a barren locust-bean tree in Bida for felling, for 7*s.* 6*d.* When he was requested to pay the licence fee of 5*s.* 6*d.* he was unable to do so. His case came before the Bida Court, but in consideration of his poverty and age the court reduced the licence fee for him to 1*s.* 4*d.* It is too early yet to say what effect this licence will have on the Nupe wood-working industry: whether it will lead to a technical readjustment and a change in the kind of timber used, or to a gradual deterioration and eventual disappearance of the indigenous wood-carving technique, which is already feeling the competition of the cheaper, and infinitely uglier, products in Western style: packing-case chairs and tables, deck-chairs, and the like.[1]

[323 325 ● 171] [1] It is to be feared that it will be this latter case with which Nupe wood-carving will meet. In other crafts these changes in material and partly style are already an accomplished fact: thus the Bida glass-workers have almost completely abandoned making their own glass, and make their bangles and beads of smelted down bottle glass of European manufacture; similarly the Nupe blacksmiths buy cheap sheet-iron at the trading stores, and no longer smelt their own iron ore.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

The Nupe brass-smiths also practise soldering with tin, and one or

two have specialized in repairs of watches, sewing machines, and such-like. They also practise a crude technique of *cire perdue* casting. This technique is applied in the making of a kind of signet-ring, very popular both among men and women, and, by one expert, in the making of small brass figures of animals, which have become quite famous in Nigeria. These figures are traded by many of the itinerant Hausa traders and are bought by Europeans who take them for products of an interesting indigenous art. I cannot prove with certainty that these little figures—*sasāgiši*, as the Nupe call them, 'likenesses of man'—have never had a deeper significance. But I am inclined to think that they have not. They have no place in Nupe culture as it presents itself to us, either as religious symbols or as symbols of wealth (in which form similar figures are used, for example, in Dahomey). I know, moreover, that in the case of the one expert who produces these figures to-day in Bida it was his own enterprising spirit that made him adopt and develop this (for a time at least very profitable) 'tourist industry'. To examine the cultural channels through which the suggestion of this production, the artistic *motif*, has reached Bida, is not part of my present task. I have, however, been able to trace two objects produced by this expert brass-worker to their original source. It is a case of what ethnographers call 'culture borrowing', and is sufficiently interesting to be quoted here. This brass-worker had for some time been producing 'dancing figures', little human figures which, by a clever utilization of stable equilibrium, were made to revolve and 'dance' on a small brass stand without falling off. He got the idea for these figures from a travelling Indian trader, who had shown him pictures of the model and explained the principle to him. He had paid the Indian 2*s.* for the 'lesson' and then proceeded to manufacture similar figures himself. The same brass-worker also produced the figure of a cobra of typically Indian design, which he had copied from a figure he had seen in the house of a European.

The raw material used by the Bida brass-smiths is all imported. The Nupe, it appears, never mined copper, nor knew how to produce the alloy. In pre-European days, I was informed, brass and copper were brought up the Niger from Onitsa and Lagos. To-day copper is obtained from English pennies, and brass from rifle cartridges which Hausa traders buy up in the garrison towns of Nigeria and then sell to the brass-smiths of Bida and other towns. Silver is gained by smelting down silver coins which the brass-smiths procure from a Kaduna bank.

A few examples may illustrate the relation between cost of material and the profit made on the finished article. Brass ladles, an article for which there is great demand in Hausa country, are sold for 3*d.* apiece; for one ladle the brass from twelve cartridge-cases is used, costing 1½*d.*; the brass-smiths can produce two ladles a day, thus making a daily profit of 3*d.* Silver bangles are sold for 12*s.* a pair; the cost of the material is 10*s.*, and the working time from two to three days, allowing a daily profit of 9*d.* to 1*s.* Aluminium bangles, which are made to cater for the cheaper tastes, are sold in large quantities to traders and middlemen; half a dozen, which can be produced in one day, are sold for 2*s.*; the material (bought in sheets at the European store) costs 1*s.* 6*d.*, and the profit per

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

specifically social and cultural aspect. Efficiency in this sense means continuity of the craft and of craft knowledge; it means the ability to raise, through the medium of an hereditary, imperceptibly changing labour group, successive generations of craftsmen. If in these respects production is planned for an unchanging future, the agency of the third factor must expose it to the disruptive effects of time and change. For it may appear as if modern economic changes directed their most destructive attacks against this third condition of closeness and co-operation, which is dependence upon regular demand. This influence is especially visible in the gradual disappearance of orders from the main customer of the country, king and court. The Great *Sallah*, once the occasion for numerous orders from the court, which kept the workshops of Bida busy for weeks, is now an occasion for making purchases at the stores that trade in European goods. At the *Sallah* of 1935, the first *Sallah* of the newly installed *Etsu*, the traditional royal gifts of kola-nuts were sent out, not in ornamental brass bowls of native make, but in newly bought enamelled teapots; the king's bodyguard, newly equipped, wore, not Bida gowns and turbans or native-made straw hats, but red blankets and Trilby hats; and many notables who would have appeared formerly on horses with costly trappings and gorgeous saddle-cloths, rode in on new, shining bicycles. Conspicuous though the competition of European goods appears, it is not the only reason for the decline of Nupe craft-guilds. The very organization of guild-organized crafts has contributed to lowering their resistance to outside pressure. The inertia inherent in the rigid group-organization with its traditional standards of production prevents the craft-guild from readjusting itself to new demands with the same ease as the individual craftsman, who is free to change his mode of production and to gain success by new methods. The decision of the younger men among the weavers to abandon the traditional production and to turn to the more profitable production of cap-making, the success of the most 'individualistic' of all crafts, brass-work, are instances of this.

But readjustment involves in reality two different and independent processes: adjustment to modern conditions may mean both adjustment in price and cost of production, and adjustment with regard to the kind of goods produced. A close examination of this question is of special interest as attempts to preserve and help native arts and crafts are to-day officially sponsored by the educational departments in many African colonies. In these attempts the second type of adjustment is frequently taken into account exclusively, the first being either ignored or artificially eliminated by turning native crafts into tourist and 'curio' industries which can command prices quite out of proportion to the native economic system. That the Nupe crafts themselves have adjusted prices to demands is clearly shown in the general fall in prices which has taken place during the last five or ten years.[1] Thus mats of the best quality were sold, nine to ten years ago, for 3*s.*; in 1934 for 9*d.* and 1*s.*; in 1936,

[1] In the two years I spent in Nupe country—two years which saw a partial economic recovery—I witnessed a corresponding slight rise in prices of native craft products.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

three cases) abandon the craft altogether. Pottery also involves a certain co-operation between the women which goes beyond the single household. The pots are made in the house, individually, but the burning of the pots takes place in an open space outside, and in this the women from different compounds work together, building the fire of grass and firewood and using it jointly for the burning of their pots. This co-operation neither expresses kinship and tribal unity, as in the case of the *koni* women dyers, nor is it based on an organized occupational union as in the case of the handicrafts of the men. Rather is it an occasional, free co-operation for the sake of expediency which is suggested by the particular technique of this handicraft.

The question of the limitation of a woman's craft to a particular section of the population reappears, with a different meaning, in weaving. The women's weaving is done on the upright broad loom (21 in. wide), which, though produced to-day by the Bida carpenters, appears to have had its origin in the south, in Yoruba country, where I have also seen it used as a woman's loom. This technique of weaving is said to be comparatively new, and not traditionally Nupe, and may indeed have come to Nupe from Yoruba in the times of the Yoruba wars, through the medium of Yoruba wives and slaves of the Nupe nobility. For women's weaving is restricted to the womenfolk of the upper classes of Nupe society; only wives and daughters of the nobility or the 'intelligentsia' possess a loom and practise the craft. There is, in fact, no house of the upper classes in which you will not find several of these looms being used by girls and women. Conversely, looms and craft are completely absent in the poorer man's home. The technique is handed on from mother to daughter. In very few cases only was I informed that a wife had been taught weaving by her mother-in-law. The profit involved in this work corresponds to the average profit of the men's handicrafts. One big embroidered cloth, 2 yards long, is sold for 10*s*. to 15*s*., the material costing 5*s*.; the weaving takes thirty days (a cheaper, not embroidered, kind of cloth can be manufactured in half the time), and the profit per day is thus between 2*d*. and 3*d*. This gives us the explanation for the limitation of this craft to a specific social stratum. Only women who have servants (*bara* and formerly slaves) to help in the housework and to run errands for them can find the leisure for this long and delicate work. But the restriction of this woman's craft to one social stratum is only made possible through the existence of a unilateral endogamy—class endogamy—on the part of the women, who rarely marry beneath their station. If I am right, and these looms have been imported into Nupe from Yoruba, we have an interesting instance of class-restricted culture contact, that is, of cultural 'borrowing' which is at once fitted into, and made to subserve, the existing system of rigid social stratification.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XVII

INDUSTRIAL LABOUR

464 177 THE influences of modern culture contact which we have seen at work in almost every field of Nupe production gain their fullest expression in this most recent native occupation. The employer is the Bida Native Administration; the employees are recruited from certain specific sections of the Nupe people, and the nature of this selection is deeply significant of the structure of the society.

We must distinguish two different categories of paid industrial labour: skilled permanent, and unskilled temporary, labour.[1] Skilled labour is employed in the workshops of the Native Administration Public Works Department, and comprises blacksmiths, mechanics, carpenters, and bricklayers, i.e. occupations which (with the exception of the bricklayers) are closely associated with the traditional native crafts of the country. Temporary unskilled labour is employed partly in addition to permanent labour in the N.A. Workshops, but mostly in occasional work demanding a large body of unskilled labourers such as construction work of various kinds. The term 'temporary' must be understood in a very loose sense; men who have been working as 'temporary' labourers, off and on, for ten or fifteen years figure prominently on my lists. Some [167] move from place to place, wherever there is a chance of finding employment. As there are large numbers of alien, non-Nupe, labourers among those engaged in temporary work in Nupe country, so we also find Nupe workmen in other districts and provinces of Nigeria. A few of these labourers have never even had another, more or less permanent, profession, but have adopted their present occupation in earliest youth. None of them, however, are skilled and specially trained labourers. By far the largest proportion of temporary labourers go home and return to whatever their original profession was when their temporary employment comes to an end. In the sense, then, that their work as labourers constitutes an alternative to some other original occupation, they can all be classed under the heading of 'temporary labourers'.

464 The data on which are based the statistical tables which follow were compiled in and near Bida in 1936. It was a fortunate coincidence that at the time a large building programme was being carried out—the construction of new office buildings in Bida, and the rebuilding of a big bridge on the Badeggi road—in which a large body of labourers was employed. My census of temporary labour was taken among the workmen who were employed in this work. I have placed bricklayers in the same category with temporary labourers, although, technically, they represent a group of skilled, permanent, workmen; but the technique of

[1] To be quite precise we should distinguish four different classes of labour: permanent and non-permanent, and skilled and unskilled. As, however, all skilled labour is permanent, and all non-permanent labour unskilled, and as unskilled permanent labour represents only a small minority (8 individuals) it is simpler to deal with the two sub-divisions as one.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

442 452 It is impossible to discuss in detail the business enterprises of the big merchants of Bida. Their business activities hardly differ in essentials from the business activities of Western civilization. They are the wholesale traders who, working with large capital, buy goods from the European stores and supply the small retail trader with commodities which the latter sells in small quantities in the town market or peddles in villages and local markets. Some big merchants are contractors who run [444] lorries for the transport of passengers and goods, others importers of goods from countries outside Nupe. Their business is to a large extent based on credit which they receive from the European trading-companies, and there are several Bida merchants who figure on the books of the trading-companies with debit accounts of £200 or more. I will only outline the effect which the introduction of commercial credit in the modern sense has had upon Nupe economy. The concept of credit itself is not alien to Nupe economy; but this new type of credit, which can be so readily obtained, opened to the Nupe trader a source, not only of working capital, but also of liquid capital as such. Native business men have learned to use this new economic device to the full, and in their own way—which is not always the orthodox way of credit operations. This is an actual and, I may add, typical instance: a Bida trader bought European cloth for £3 in the store, on a three months' credit. He then sold the cloth at a loss, for £2, to a retail trader who was not unnaturally very ready to pay in cash for these goods the normal price of which was well known to him. With the £2 our trader went round to the villages buying in advance the cotton crop of the year (this happened two months before the harvest was dūe). He paid an extremely low price—in certain cases only the annual tax-money of the farmer—and two months later sold the crop to the trading-company for an amount which was sufficient to pay his debt and to make a profit of £1 in addition.[1]

439 177 The increasing volume of European trade in Nigeria as well as in other parts of Africa is due to a large variety of causes. The cheapness and, generally, better quality of the European goods is often mentioned, and also the change of taste which is brought about by education and by the example of European standards of living. Our short survey of the influence of European trade upon the native economy in Nupe has revealed another aspect of the problem, the importance of which has hitherto been hardly realized. Trade in European goods, *qua* trade, is a highly lucrative enterprise which opens up a chance for business and profits unrivalled in purely native economy. It is to a considerable extent the native trader himself who is pushing trade in European goods. He is its keenest propagandist, for he is the one who benefits first and most.

435 4-gallon tin of paraffin costs 7*s.* 6*d.*; one bottle is sold for 6*d.*, giving a profit of 8*s.* The higher the investment, the higher evidently the profit.

[1] The device as such, to sell goods at a loss for the sake of ready money, and to make the loss good on a subsequent sale, is not new. Hausa traders, for example, sometimes sell their (native) goods at a loss in Bida in order to obtain money, and with this money to buy certain Bida goods which they can sell in Hausa country at a profit large enough to cover their previous loss.

I: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

561 554 themselves similarly heterogeneous and arbitrary, including Bida titles among its traditional village ranks.

561 554 576 The system of precedence involved in *ena* ranks and grades is taken very seriously, and the rigid rules of etiquette which govern it are enacted with all solemnity. Much of the *ena* business takes place, as we shall see, within the single *ena*; but when members of different grades meet—for example, at family feasts in the house of a member, or at collective farm-work—submissive or condescending behaviour marks their relation towards each other. Members of a junior grade will never dance when members of senior grades are present, except with their special permission and at their request; in collective farm-work the junior grades work at the back of the team, at less important and less conspicuous tasks. Age-grade etiquette is even more emphatic within the individual association. At communal meals the 'subalterns' will wait till their superiors have eaten; at *ena* feasts subaltern and senior ranks will never dance at the same time; when greeting a superior, the age-grade member of lower rank will squat down and bend his head, exactly as prescribed for intercourse between superiors and inferiors in the social scale of 'real life'.

561 554 369 In the village *ena* it is only in general terms that the ranks indicate social position on the rank-scale of the association. In the town *ena* the ranks are sometimes chosen so as to indicate and do justice to the special gifts, or the special social position outside the *ena*, which characterize individual members. In this the organization of the town *ena* reflects the more highly differentiated social structure of urban society. Thus a Bida *ena*, composed largely of illiterate members, assigned to a young man who had been educated in the Government Middle School the title *Naïbi*, a rank of the Mohammedan clergy which can be held only by scholars. The rank-list of another *ena* included the rank *Bororó*, lit. Head of the Bororó, its holder being the son of the late Emir's 'regent-delegate' for the Bororó Fulani. Some Bida age-grade ranks indicate a certain official capacity held by a member in the *ena*. Thus I found a rank *Dzufã* (lit. pocket) bestowed on a young man who acted as 'purser' of the group. All purchases and payments for *ena* purposes were made through him; when, for example, a member decided to give a party for the group he would place his money contribution in the hands of the *Etsu*, who would then hand it over to the 'purser' as the member responsible for financial arrangements. In one *ena* I found the rather curious rank *Mataushe* (Hausa, lit. 'the man who rubs', i.e. 'masseur'), by which name a certain slave or body-servant of the Nupe king was known whose special duty it was to massage the feet of his master. In like manner it was the duty of this 'office holder' in the age-grade association to massage the feet of his *Etsu* at meetings of the group when his master felt tired.

561 554 177 One group of ranks typical of the Bida *ena* deserves special attention, namely the ranks which are organized on 'European lines' and copy, not ranks and offices of Nupe society, but ranks, offices, and even names of Europeans with whom the Nupe had come into contact. Such titles are often amusing and even puzzling. In one *ena* the head of the group was

1. Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

not called *Etsu* but *Gomna Ture*, European Governor. Other ranks in the same *ena* were *Kantoma* (Station Magistrate), *Joji* (District Officer), *Likita* (Doctor); there was also the rank *Dupienne*, derived from the name of Mr. Dupigny, a former Resident of Niger Province, a rank *Borti* (Major Burton), *Mallam Smi* (Mr. Smith, a former Superintendent of Education), and *Jamsi Dogo* (lit. Long James, a title which referred to a former clerk in the Divisional Office); it was, not unnaturally, the lowest title on the rank-list. Another *ena* organized on modern lines was divided into two sections, a 'native' and a 'European' section, the former consisting of Nupe titles, the latter of Europeanized names and ranks, such as *Gomna*, *Joji*, *Likita*, *Rezdet* (Resident), *Kantoma*, *Misisi* (Mrs.), *Hafissa* (Officer), and *Karamin Joji* (Assistant District Officer). In the normal business of the *ena* these two sections behaved differently, and were bound by different rules of etiquette, native and 'European', which meant that the members of the 'European section' had to greet each other in European fashion, by lifting their caps, and had to eat at a table with fork and spoon. I could not help laughing when these rules were explained to me; but the head of the group pointed out, rather indignantly, that this was the most natural thing in the world; after all, 'a Governor does not eat with his hands'.

The seriousness with which these distinctions of ranks are observed, the realism with which this playing at society *à la Européenne* is enacted, forbids us to treat it merely as a childish and meaningless make-belief. Psychologically, it has the significance of a substitute for thrills and achievements which normal life cannot offer. The inclusion of titles and forms of conduct copied from the British officials in the country is part of that 'realism' which marks age-grade etiquette and precedence: it does justice to the new political order of the society, and partly also to the fact that high social position in present-day native society implies intimacy with the Administration and high British officials. If it were asked why the Bida *ena* chose as symbols for social gradation ranks and offices so far removed from their ordinary life, I should point out that there is less difference than one might assume between the two models which the *ena* could choose—the model of European and the model of native society. To the average Bida man the highest ranks and offices of his own society are no less remote and inaccessible than the office of a District Officer or Governor. We must add that the choice of a particular rank-system for the *ena* is in no way determined by the social stratum from which it is recruited. Bida age-grade associations of *tdlaka* and *saraki* alike adopt the highest ranks both of traditional and British society. Only for a small minority—the few *ena* of the ruling class—may these ranks and offices, and the whole exalted social life which they depict, one day become reality. For the large majority they represent an infinitely remote, imaginary social existence.

Here we are led to the wider problem of the relation between the world of pretence built up in the age-grade association and the values of 'real', that is, adult, social life. It can best be approached through a comparison of village and town *ena*. In the village association the social life enacted in the *ena*, and its prototype in adult life, stand in the relation of potentiality

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

II

DIVINATION

787 WE shall deal with two methods of divination, both of which are known throughout the country and applied on all occasions, trivial as well as serious. The first, called *eba*, consists in throwing strings of shells and resembles in technique the *ifa* divination of Yoruba; the second, *hati*, is of Mohammedan origin and involves drawing mystic patterns in the sand.[1] The two methods appeal to a somewhat different public, the former being practised mainly in the villages and pagan districts, the latter in the sophisticated capital, Bida. The division, however, is far from rigid; also, as we shall see, the two methods share certain essential features in spite of the difference in technique and religious background.

[177]

Two other types of divination, which are used infrequently and mainly on minor matters, and which are known only in the river area, may be disregarded. One, called *evo* ('cowrie shells'), is a simplified version of the method of *eba*. The other, called *kpápagi* ('tortoise'), employs the dried, hollowed-out body of a tortoise, which is made to slide down a taut string. This is a crude oracle, permitting only three answers—'yes' (if the tortoise glides down quickly), 'no' (if it does not glide down at all), and 'doubtful' (if it glides down slowly).

1. THE MECHANICS OF EBA

787 791 The method of *eba* is far from uniform. Although the divining apparatus itself and the principles of interpretation are the same everywhere, the 'key' used by the diviner, his invocations, and his minor paraphernalia may differ from locality to locality, even from one person to the other. This scope for variety does not extend to the attitude assumed in the act of divining. The eight men I observed all went through their act in a serious and tense mood, their gestures and utterances from time to time rising to an excitement which lent to the proceedings a thoroughly dramatic atmo-

[1] The Nupe term *hati* appears to be a corruption of the Arabic *hatim*. 'seal', 'magic square'; cf. the corresponding Hausa term *hatimi*.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

whereupon he announced: 'The grandfather who begot your father—his name is that of the child.' The diviner would not explain his reasoning more precisely beyond saying that pattern 4 in 'house' 1, meaning 'many deaths', must relate to a *kuci* five 'deaths', i.e. generations, removed, while pattern 2 in 'house' 6 indicated the male sex of the *kuci*. Since the Nupe usually regard a great-grandfather as the most remote ancestor likely to be reincarnated, the diviner's reference to an additional generation would seem to be a plausible interpretation of a throw meaning 'many deaths'.

4. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The names of the 'houses' and the meanings attached to the various throws, even in the simple key series, clearly illustrate the close connection between divination and social life. Among the names and meanings we find represented, not only the universal problems of men and communities (death, birth, rain, illness) or particular religious notions (*Sokó*, *kuti*, performance of sacrifices), but also the mundane interests typical of Nupe society. Events on the high roads and travel and trade; the ever-present social issue of 'greatness', that is, of success in the struggle for rank and status; and the equally ubiquitous interest in matters politic, chieftainship, councils of elders, the actions of the ruling class—all these have their place in the scheme of divining and partly even in its basic vocabulary. Similarly, each relevant social grouping is explicitly referred to: the 'house', that is, the large extended family under a family head (*emi*); the 'town' or village (*ezi*); the 'whole country', that is, the kingdom of Nupe; and the class of the 'great men' and nobility. As we have seen, the diverse social settings of the capital and of the villages are reflected in certain variants in the rules of divination. These affect the individual case as well; for a diviner would interpret the prophecies referring to 'gifts' or 'greatness' differently when dealing with a *talaka* (a commoner or peasant) than when dealing with a member of the aristocracy. In the former case 'gifts' mean bowls of food and 'greatness' the favours of a nobleman; in the latter case the gifts turn into more valuable presents, and 'greatness' bears on promotion in rank and title. We have seen, too, that the rules of divination are far from static, having been successfully adapted even to recent conditions and to political problems only some forty years old. We can even point to a typical, transitional phase in this process; for the choice mentioned before, of interpreting the same throw as meaning either 'rain' or 'friendly relations with the White Man', means nothing else.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

a new priest is born, the village must temporarily cease to perform the ritual altogether and join instead in the celebrations of a neighbouring, more fortunate, locality.

The *gunnu* priest is also in other ways elevated above common mortals. In everyday life there is little to distinguish the *Žigí* or *Ndazo* from the average Nupe peasant. The only visible distinction lies in their manner of dress; for the two priests may only wear a loincloth and a piece of cloth slung across the shoulder, never the more elaborate flowing gown and trousers of Nupe, and must always walk bareheaded. Both the simple dress and the uncovered head are also obligatory for anyone attending the rituals in question (and indeed most rituals), so that the priests are as it were always 'on duty' and constantly display their association with things sacred. In the case of the *Ndazo*, his very life is sacred: he is inviolable, and no one may lay hands on him, even if he committed some serious offence. Also, when the *Ndazo* dies, the usual funerary rites are replaced by a performance of the *gunnu*. Concerning the priestly dress, the usual explanation is that the *Žigí* and *Ndazo* must not wear anything 'tied round the waist' (as they would if they wore trousers); but the people do not speculate further, and the *Ndazo's* birth-mark is taken to mean simply something that is rare and lucky, and attaches to the most vital part of the body, the head. Characteristically, another lucky birth-mark, once more on the head, is linguistically associated with the *gunnu*: children born in a caul are called *Ndagunnu*, 'Father *gunnu*'.

Of the three fixed rituals of Doko the *gunnu* is undoubtedly the most important, representing the peak of ceremonial life and being thought of as harbouring the strongest force of *kuti*. Equally, it is the only ritual bearing so conspicuously the stamp of the miraculous. Somewhat surprisingly, the greater importance of the *gunnu* has not helped to protect it from the impact of cultural change. On the contrary, the *gunnu* is usually the first ritual to disappear or at least to lose its character of a 'fixed' ritual, surviving only as an occasional, 'movable' ceremony. Now several of the villages which abandoned the *gunnu* altogether did so when their 'born' *Ndazo* died or the family of hereditary priests became extinct. Whatever other influences may have tended to weaken the hold of the *gunnu* ritual, the difficulty of finding a successor to this unique priestship must have hastened the process; so that the link with the miraculous, as it helped to raise the cult above all others, also made it more vulnerable.

(ii) *Movable Rituals*

These are quickly described; for they are simple and business-like, devoid both of elaborate proceedings and complicated

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

796x
881
796x
881
177

miscuously—no one cares. Which final aspect of the *gunnu* is once more emphasized in all statements.

The ceremonial is thus full of allusions to procreation and fertility. But we noticed also the emphasis on male adolescence, more precisely, on the role of the age grades, on the respect relationship between youth and old age, and on the teaching or initiation of the novices. In the ritual I described this last aspect was only lightly touched upon. But in a fuller version of the *gunnu*, which disappeared in Doko some ten or twenty years ago, the emphasis on initiation was much stronger. The short prelude in the bush was then expanded to a full night; and the youths were made to dress up in elaborate fashion and to paint their bodies red and white, so that everybody should see that they were '*gunnu* men'. All through the night the novices were kept in a state of nervous excitement and fear by tales of the spirits that haunt the bush; often the dreaded apparition of the *ndakó gboyá* would materialize to punish any youth who had, in the preceding year, offended against this or that rule of custom, and especially against the rules of filial respect. We shall hear more of the *ndakó gboyá* later on; let me say here that its part is acted by a member of the secret society of that name, and that it is also referred to as the 'policeman of the *gunnu*', which epithet aptly summarizes its functions.

Today this episode has fallen in abeyance in Doko as elsewhere. The reasons are not the same in all places. In Kutigi, a relatively recent and pseudo-Moslem ceremonial has absorbed the initiation aspect of the *gunnu*, so that the more elaborate version of the ritual came to lose its particular appeal.[1] In Mokwa, the vigil in the bush fell in disfavour with the young men, who refused to suffer any longer the threats and punishments that go with that episode; the remonstrations of parents and elders were met by the argument that even young men were nowadays earning money and paying taxes, and had hence become the equals of their seniors. In Beni country, the attractions of Bida town were seducing more and more adolescents away from the 'crude' village celebrations, so that eventually the greatly reduced attendance made the whole initiation rite seem futile. About that time, too, the Government suppressed the *ndakó gboyá* secret society, the drama in the bush thus losing its main actors. These varied causes reflect the multifarious changes assailing traditional Nupe life, in the political and economic sphere, in family relations, and in recreation as well as in religious belief. That the changes were so effective in truncating the *gunnu* (while falling more lightly or tardily upon other ceremonials) is not due only to the force behind the new influences; rather is it in large measure due to a factor touched upon before,

[1] See my article *The Gani ritual of Nupe*, Africa, 1949, vol. XIX, p. 183.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

X796
881
177

the greater vulnerability of the *gunnu* ceremonial. For the very ambitiouness of its scope exposes it, on too many sides at once, to the impact of change.

3. THE RIVER

(i) *Ritual Calendar: Priestship*

X796

In Jebba Island I recorded the fullest repertoire of rituals anywhere in Nupe country, including three movable and five 'fixed' rituals, one of the latter being also performed 'without a month', whenever the need arises. Not all, however, are still in use, so that the ritual calendar of the island now approximates more closely to that of other communities. Though the people quote specific rational reasons for the discontinuation of the respective rituals, I suspect that the 'repertoire' itself proved too large and simply became unworkable under modern conditions. Jebba Island owes its rich list of ceremonials essentially to two facts; first, to its double livelihood, derived from the land as well as from the river, and reflected in the religious institutions; and secondly, to the possession of the sacred emblems of Tsoede, which are scattered mainly along the old highway of the Kingdom—the river valley.

Today, the Jebba people perform two movable and two fixed rituals, one which serves both purposes and one which, formerly fixed, has now become 'movable'. The movable rituals proper are the *ketsá*, previously mentioned, and the *tídzana*, a sacrifice to the sacred 'Chain of Tsoede'. The fixed ceremonials comprise the rituals *mamma* and *dzokó*, both performed in the 9th month (November–December). The *gunnu*, traditionally performed in the same month, is nowadays celebrated as a movable rite, though in a different sense it still retains its compulsory character. The ritual *ndáduma*, finally, is performed both as a fixed rite, again in the 9th month, and as a movable ritual. Another movable ritual, the *kikinta*, concerned mainly with success in hunting and fishing but also with childbirth and health, is now hardly practised; and a fixed ritual, *sokokó*, was discontinued some twenty years ago. To some extent the observance of the ritual *mamma* has also been affected by the changed conditions; for most of the grass masks worn in the ceremonial were destroyed in a fire some years ago and have not been replaced; the people now husband their two remaining masks and perform the ritual only in years when there is a special reason. Even so, the ceremonial cannot be moved to another date, and has for this reason been included among the 'fixed' rituals.

The different rituals are again in the charge of different officiants.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

the *ndakó gboyá*. As mentioned before, the practice was abandoned apparently in the early twenties. But it was since revived once, in 1931, at the death of the village chief, when even the *ndakó gboyá* society played its part (in spite of the official ban).

4. RITUAL AND CULTURE CHANGE

This seems an opportune place to consider the impact of changed conditions upon Nupe ritual, at least in its negative, disruptive aspects. The changes undergone by the Jebba rituals do not of course stand alone; in the last generation or two numerous pagan rituals all over Nupe country have been disappearing or have suffered more or less radical modifications. But the conditions in Jebba are in some respects unique and hence capable of illuminating factors and processes obscured elsewhere.

Let me, to begin with, say a few words about one of the abandoned Jebba rituals, the *sokokó*, whose name suggests a ceremonial of uncommon importance. It belonged to the cycle of rites performed in the 9th month; it was concerned with fertility, health, and prosperity in general and centred upon a sacrifice performed on the top of a hill overlooking the river valley. It is said to have been discontinued in 1914, when the residence of the Governor was built on the site of the sacrifice.

Now, similar reasons, similarly fortuitous, are also quoted in connection with certain other changes of ritual practice. In each case, my informants maintained, the disappearance of the *bà ɨiko*, the 'black' or 'secret place', led to the disappearance of the respective ceremonial or at least to some radical change in the observance. It is true that the place formerly chosen for the esoteric part of the *dzakŏ*, which used to lie on an uninhabited bank of the river, is today occupied by a riverside camp of Hausa fishermen; the old *gunnu* grove and the place in the bush where the *mamma* masks used to dress in secrecy have similarly lost their former seclusion, being now close to crowded thoroughfares. Yet it is equally true that suitable adjustments could be made: the *dzakó* is still regularly performed, with a programme only slightly changed; the *mamma*, though performed irregularly, has suffered this change for different reasons, and the masked dancers can still dress in secrecy, now in the privacy of an elder's house. Only the observance of the *gunnu* has been altered in a more far-reaching manner. These facts bear out a point made previously, that sacred places and the like are of relatively little importance in Nupe religion. If, then, a ritual is abandoned altogether or radically modified, this must be due to factors other than the loss of the customary locality and seclusion, inconvenient though the loss might be.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

One such change, affecting the *gunnu*, has already been discussed. The changes that occurred in Jebba, however, show a new and interesting aspect in that they reduced an unusually rich repertoire of rites to dimensions both more moderate and more common. This levelling-down of the ritual schedule would seem to imply two things. First, it suggests that Jebba, which had clearly for a great length of time carried on happily with its numerous rituals, reduced their number in a crisis which did not as seriously affect other communities, whose ritual programme was less ambitious; secondly, we may assume that this levelling-down amounted to a reduction to essentials.

(1) The first assumption repeats, on a more general plane, what we previously said about the *gunnu* and its 'vulnerability' under changed conditions; if this seemed to attach to the ambitious scope of a single cult, the ambitiousness of a whole repertoire of ceremonials now proves to have the same effect. As regards the 'crisis' which precipitated the disruption, I already suggested its nature: the over-rich repertoire proved unworkable under modern conditions. More precisely, its demands upon time, interest, and resources must in many ways have clashed with the increase in trade and production, with the more severe economic competition as well as the new forms of economic stress, and with the many new interests, aesthetic, recreational, and political, which emerged in recent years. These influences, too, have been felt throughout Nupe country. Comparing Jebba and Doko in particular, it may be said that both have been exposed to much the same impact, as they were similarly fortified against it. In Doko, the impact of change came from the proximity of Bida, the centre of trade and political activity, of a new religion, and of a new metropolitan culture. In Jebba the river and the railway, with their large cosmopolitan traffic, exercised a comparable influence. The Doko people are sustained in their traditional way of life by the knowledge that they are neither alone nor isolated, but belong to a large, closely knit group, the Beni sub-tribe, sharing the same institutions, intermarrying, and looking back upon a common history. In Jebba, the links with the riverain communities and the tangible evidence of the past, embodied in the Tsoede emblems, help to buttress the traditional values. If these weakened in the religious field, they did so, not because of the greater weight of changed circumstances in that community, but because of the greater 'vulnerability' of its religious institutions.

(2) The last remarks also suggest the sense in which the changes in the repertoire of rituals can be called a levelling-down to 'essentials'. As we have seen, the association of Jebba with the river and the figure of Tsoede is behind a large proportion of the

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

X796
177

Jebba rituals; and these remained unaffected by the general reduction in number. Jebba, then, abandoned (or abandoned first) the rituals of more general appeal and more common occurrence, and preserved those bearing on its peculiar geographical and historical position. The 'national' rites as it were gave way before those of local importance. Equally, the rituals which gave way—*gunnu*, *sokokó*, *žikinta*—had in essence been concerned with benefits of a very general order, with fertility, health, livelihood and prosperity at large; while those which were preserved voice much more specific aims, bearing on the river floods, on ordeals, smallpox, and the expulsion of 'evil things'. Let us note that, when the former were abandoned, relatively little was lost, since the same aims were common to most other rituals; while the second group of ceremonials, which were not so duplicated, could not be discontinued without a serious loss of this kind. It fits into this picture that the Jebba *gunnu* was preserved in its more specific form, as a funerary rite for titled elders, and not as an annual ceremonial meant to renew fertility and well-being.

This process of change clearly presupposes that 'overlap' in the efficacy of religious observances which we noted so frequently. It is now thrown into relief from a new angle. The 'overlap', as we see, is not irreducible: it may give way, in a crisis, before the assessment of essentials.

A last question remains: do fixed and movable rituals resist change to a different degree? The fact that a movable Jebba rite, the *žikinta*, disappeared together with other, fixed, ceremonials would suggest a negative answer. Yet we also know that certain originally fixed rituals only survived in movable form, or at least in a form no longer rigidly bound up with annual performances, such as the *mamma* in Jebba and the *gunnu* there and elsewhere. By means of this conversion the loss of the religious rite was minimized; though it disappeared as a regularly repetitive institution it remained available as a possibility, to be utilized 'when the need arises'; which compromise seems adequately explained by the lesser demands upon time, energy, and resources of the movable ceremonials, especially when the conversion goes together with performance on a lesser scale and in 'businesslike' manner. But another factor is probably also at work. For we can understand that people who have abandoned or neglected many of their traditional religious institutions will revert to them in sudden emergencies or times of stress, that is, in precisely the conditions for which the movable rituals are designed. The sudden, single revival of the Jebba *gunnu* after a pause of many years seems a case in point; and similar evidence also comes from other Nupe communities.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

of medicines almost as unequivocally evil. The same men, let us note, will also administer helpful, beneficial, 'good' medicine. On the whole, the latter are more numerous, and are considered more important when it comes to discussions or arguments. As for the others, the experts would claim that they take due precautions, giving the medicine away only to 'good people' and 'for the sake of God', not for ordinary gain. But these personal qualms do not explain away the confusion of moral standards and do not answer the question why practices contemptible by common agreement should yet be accepted and actively pursued. The answer seems to lie in the amoral character of the Nupe universe. There it is, composed of good things and bad, the handiwork of a deity which unconcernedly sets good beside evil. Man, it would seem, has no call to improve upon creation. The qualms of the *cigbeciži* are a concession to social conscience not to religious scruples; in the last resort they are concerned only with appearances—that their craft should not look like witchcraft. As regards the evil potentialities of 'medicine', they are accepted with the same optimistic cynicism with which the Nupe view the very world in which they live.

6. MODERN INFLUENCES

Islam has on the whole brought little change. It bans the hereditary medicines, since they approximate to the pagan worship of *kuci* and *kuti*, and may well have caused some of them to disappear. But the craft of the barber-doctors enjoys the respectability of a truly Mohammedan profession; while the medicines of individuals and the craft of the *cigbeciži* flourish among Mohammedans no less than among the pagans. Indeed many of these experts would regard themselves as good Moslems. Even the Master of the *cigbeciži* dresses like a Moslem, goes to the mosque, observes the fast and other rules of Islam, and boasts of his descent from men who served the Mohammedan Emirs of Nupe.

Nor do specifically Moslem practices compete seriously with the traditional craft. A great many mallams administer cures and sell charms or amulets, both prepared in strict accordance with the Moslem creed as they understand it. The cures all take the same form: the attributes of Allah or certain verses of the Qoran are written in ink on a wooden slate which is then washed clean, the inky water being drunk by the patient. The amulets, called *laya* (a Hausa word), consist of pieces of paper similarly covered with sacred writing, which are sewn into small leather cases and worn on the body. But Nupe religious conscience is accommodating: pagans wear the Mohammedan charms as often as Mohammedans

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

consult a pagan (or semi-pagan) *cigbeci*. That the powers of *cigbe* are greater as well as more varied few will doubt; nor do the mallams themselves deny that many of the cures and other effects of *cigbe* are beyond their ken. It was, for example, a Moslem scholar of high repute who put me in touch with the *cigbeciɓi*, being himself a firm believer in the excellence of their art.

Modern medicine, as practised in hospitals and dispensaries, is a more serious rival. Nupe men and women who for the first time face this novel version of *cigbe* may be suspicious or openly afraid; often they will discontinue the visits to the doctor or dispenser, or leave unused the drugs they are given. A steadily increasing number, however, now have fair confidence in doctors and drugs and would be prepared to admit that our cures are on the whole better than theirs. This is true especially of minor surgical treatments and of injections of all kinds, that is, of treatments utterly unlike the indigenous practices and often 'miraculous' in their effect. This may seem a lukewarm statement; but I do not think that it can be put more positively or optimistically, at least as regards the average Nupe. Administration officials, teachers, and others who have been in close contact with Europeans are exceptions (though only to some extent).[1] Certainly, the Nupe are turning to European medicine much more slowly and waveringly than other African groups I know.

Now these other groups are also more primitive than the Nupe or without a similar, highly organized and would-be rational therapeutic skill. The diverse reaction is thus no accident. Fear and suspicion there would be in either case. But in the more primitive groups organized medicine, as a purely profane skill or knowledge, is entirely novel and unprecedented; it may have to fight religious prejudice, but not its own kind: while in Nupe precisely this is true. Other Africans might feel that European medicine clashes with their religious notions, or identify it with evil magic or witchcraft. The more sophisticated Nupe merely mistrusts the knife which, as everyone knows, 'cannot heal', or cynically suspects the doctors of poisoning patients who fail to recover. At best, he regards the European remedy as one of several possibilities, which he is wont to try out one after the other. And here the odds are not all in favour of the former.

[1] To wit, the following extract from an English composition on *The Hospital*, written in 1936 by a Nupe secondary school boy and corrected by his teacher. 'The disadvantage (of hospitals) is that when a man is taken there to be cured and if the nurses see that they cannot cure him, or perhaps he is given any kind of drugs and he still is exactly opposite as he was brought in, they give him a kind of medicine which makes he will die away.' The teacher found that only the last sentence needed correction, thus—'they give him a poison and he will die'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

177 755 757 Many cases are already hopeless when they reach the doctors and hospitals, with the result that their remedies will appear to be no better than those of barbers or *cigbeciši*; above all, the European doctor does not profess to cure impotence or sterility, or to procure sterility; so that the most widely sought treatments are also an admitted gap in this new knowledge of 'medicine'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

VII

STRANGE GODS

In this chapter I propose to discuss the adoption, by the Nupe, of originally alien beliefs and practices. We shall not be concerned with the pure mechanics of 'borrowing' or 'diffusion'; at least, we shall be concerned only with the motives behind these processes. For we cannot but assume that the adoption of novel or alien elements into any religious system, far from being haphazard, does follow from intelligible motives, which must in turn relevantly bear on the character of the religion and, ultimately, of the whole culture of which it is a part. So that the information so gained will either confirm our interpretation of that character or correct it, bringing to light hitherto unperceived aspects.

This may only be a heuristic assumption to begin with; and other, more specific ones, could at once be added—that the novel features must bear some affinity to the traditional pattern; or that they serve to redress some pre-existing inadequacy; or that they offer a chance of expression to some new trend, say, a changed outlook of the people, which the traditional beliefs and practices failed to satisfy. It must be admitted that in the anthropological field the prerequisite evidence is not easy to procure and that even the first step, the mere discovery of the alien elements, may be difficult or uncertain. Fairly recent additions are usually readily traced; but in the absence of historical records originally alien features long since absorbed may remain unidentifiable. Which proviso holds fully in the case of Nupe religion. Furthermore, the inferences we might draw from our study of 'adoptions' must be corroborated by the appropriate negative evidence, that is, by instances of 'rejection'. But though here we are likely to meet with further technical difficulties, mainly because there might be no record of the rejected chances, the situation in Nupe does afford relevant evidence of this kind. It lies in the religious observances practised by close neighbours of the Nupe or by immigrant groups in their midst, with which the Nupe people are fully familiar, yet which they did not choose to adopt or imitate. Finally, the adoption of alien features, or indeed of a whole alien creed, may conceivably have taken place under pressure; in which

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

771
177

case none of our assumptions would apply, or would apply without considerable qualifications. Again, the situation is simplified in Nupe; for only in the case of Islam was the adoption of the alien creed backed by social and political pressure; all other adoptions (or rejections) were spontaneous and voluntary. Let us make this aspect our starting point and begin with a brief outline of the chances of this nature that were offering to the Nupe.

I. ADOPTIONS AND REJECTIONS

The southern neighbours of the Nupe, the Yoruba, possess a religious system which contains many features diametrically opposed to those characterizing Nupe religion. Yoruba religion is based upon a pantheon of deities, all anthropomorphously conceived, who severally govern the universe. Each deity has his (or her) definite sphere—the sky, thunder, rain, land, sea, forests, animals, fishes, crops, special diseases, special skills, divination, and so forth; so that the universe is as it were split up and departmentalized in detailed fashion. The deities are served by a number of specialized orders of priesthood; they are represented, with beautiful realism, in bronze, wood, terracotta, and stone; and masked dances and ritual drama, employing again realistic likenesses, play a prominent part in all Yoruba cults. As has been mentioned, the average Nupe is familiar with the main features of Yoruba religion. Not only has he encountered them on his many travels, but in the area west and south of the Niger Nupe and Yoruba settlements are interspersed, and in certain cases even joined together in twin villages (as in Shari or Shonga). Above all, since 1860 or thereabouts colonies of Yoruba known as *Konú* have been settled in numerous villages of Nupe country, where they form well-defined sections and specialize in their traditional crafts of weaving and indigo dyeing. Though today wholly 'Nupe-ized' in language and mode of life, they still publicly perform one of their masked ceremonies, the *egungun*, known as *gugu* to the Nupe, which serves both as a funeral rite and as an annual ritual safeguarding fertility and well-being. The northern and north-eastern districts of Nupe are conquered territory, inhabited by people of Gwari extraction, who came under Nupe domination in the last hundred years and are still referred to as 'Gwari slaves'. Their traditional culture must have closely resembled that of Nupe, while an effective process of Nupe-ization has obliterated most of the differences that did exist. But a few sections of the Gwari-Nupe have preserved a cult alien to Nupe practice; it is called *sogba* and is concerned with childbirth and the cure of barrenness, with the conviction and punishment of

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52
Hausa MS12

N 771 177

criminals, and with the special burial rites for people killed by lightning. Again, there is a large and influential colony of Hausa in the capital Bida. These immigrants too have kept alive one of their typical cults, the *bori*, which they stage publicly in the streets and squares of the town. Another group of immigrants settled around Kutigi, in the centre of Nupe country, towards the end of the eighteenth century; they were Mohammedans hailing from Bornu and brought with them one of their traditional ceremonials, the *gani*, which contains several features strikingly 'un-Nupe' in character.

All these, then, were potential models for the Nupe to follow; as we shall see, the Nupe reaction towards them was neither uniform nor, at first sight at least, consistent.

(i) *The Hausa Bori*

H N 771 177

To begin with a clear case of 'rejection'. It is represented in the *bori* cult, which can at once be described as utterly uncongenial to Nupe religious conceptions. It is based upon the shamanistic idea of spirit possession, revealed in hysterical or cataleptic fits and in trance states, when the person so affected is believed to speak with the voice of a spirit and to behave like one. These states may occur spontaneously or may be artificially induced, especially by the use of music, which is again distinctly foreign to Nupe, employing the monotonous, arhythmic playing of a single-string fiddle. When spontaneous, the fits or trance states are regarded as spirit-caused mental disorders, while the induced states are regarded both as therapeutic measures and as means of spirit control in general. The 'theory' behind the cult is briefly this. There exists a wide variety of spirits (*aljannu*), some benevolent, others evil, each bearing a special name and character, and revealing itself in the particular gestures, gait and voice exhibited by the possessed person. Each spirit also has a tune and dance step peculiar to it, and one believes that the playing of the tune and the performance of the dance both evoke the spirit in normal individuals and placate and control it in those 'possessed'. Any person exhibiting the spirit-caused disorders is therefore placed under the observation of a cult member, who is expected to identify the spirit, and to placate and exorcise it. The latter act does not mean the final departure of the spirit; the aim is, rather, to bring the spirit 'visits' under control, so that they materialize only when evoked in the *bori* dances but do not otherwise threaten the human host. Each person so cured becomes a member of the *bori* cult; but many others will try to join it without this particular qualification, seeking the occasional trance induced in the *bori* dances. The *bori* cult thus has its own society, which is loosely organized (though

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52
Hausa MSIZ
Gbari FF23

H
N
771
177

it has a number of officials of varying rank) and is constantly enlarged through the inclusion of 'cured' patients and of those 'normal' individuals who have been successful in soliciting the 'spirit possession'.

There is no secrecy about the cult and its dance performances; they are staged at frequent intervals, both in private houses and in public, and are always watched by interested Nupe crowds. But no Nupe will join in the dances or has ever entered the society. Note that the cult thus rejected revolves upon a 'treatment' of mental derangements, of diseases, that is, for which Nupe therapeutic art admits to have no reliable remedy. Yet, though always ready to experiment with new cures, neither the Nupe public nor the medicine experts have been persuaded by the *borí*. Admittedly, the *borí* is not simply another cure or remedy: it involves the wholly strange experience of auto-suggestion and hysterical abandonment or ecstasis. It equally involves, on the intellectual plane, the acceptance of new premisses (the detailed spirit universe). But as we shall see from our next example, a somewhat similar intellectual readjustment did in fact occur in the case of another alien cult and 'cure'.

(ii) *The Sogba Cult*

N
G
771
177
794

This cult occurs among a section of the Gwari who call themselves Gwari-Basa and live near Wushishi, to the north of Nupe, and also in a number of villages belonging to the conquered, Nupeized parts of Gwari country. Its name, *sogba*, means 'lightning', both in Gwari and Nupe. The cult is widely known also in other parts of Nupe country, and is everywhere regarded as alien, in spite of certain obvious 'Nupeisms'.[1] The name for the hereditary priest, for example, is *Žigí*, while the Gwari priests bear different names, and the whole cult is called a *kuti*, which is once more not Gwari nomenclature. In its more elaborate form the *sogba* cult culminates in an annual communal ceremony, fixed for the 2nd or 7th month, at which the men sacrifice a dog in great secrecy and the women sing and dance, carrying iron rods with bells closely resembling the *sãyi* of the *ndakó gboyá*.[2] The cult further includes a small-scale ritual of the movable type, performed by the priest at the request of clients, both fellow villagers and strangers.

These *ad hoc* ministrations are invoked for one of two reasons,

[1] It is not certain that the cult is in fact of Gwari origin; according to some informants it came originally from Yagba (a southern section of the Yoruba), and has been brought to Gwari and Nupe by immigrants from that country.

[2] This annual ritual was absent in the place I visited, Wushishi, its sketchy description being derived from verbal information only. The account that follows, however, is based on direct observation.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52
Gbari FF23

either to procure the fertility of childless women or to bring about the punishment of offenders, especially of thieves, whose identity is unknown. In either event a small payment in kolanuts and money is made to the priest. The ritual involves the use of a special cult object unknown in the rest of Nupe; it consists of a forked wooden post, cut from a certain tree in such a manner that it resembles a 'tree cut in two by lightning' and planted in the ground in the priest's house, either inside a hut or in the open. Around the foot of the post there are a number of flat, black, polished stones which are described as 'thunderbolts' (*sogba* or *sokógba*). Nothing is known about the origin of the stones save that some had been collected by the grandfather of the present priest and others inherited from more distant ancestors. The priest also owns a few of the bell-rods mentioned before and a *cigbe* shrine containing a nameless 'medicine'.

The client is made to sit in a hut away from the scene of the actual rite, which is executed by the priest and two assistants (his sons or brothers). The priest crouches in front of the forked post, his assistants standing on his right and left, each gripping one of the branches of the fork. The priest pours a little beer on the 'thunderbolts' and on the ground, and briefly and informally invokes the *kuti*, explaining the nature of the request. The operative phrase is—'*Sogba*, may the woman bear a child', or—'*Sogba*, may the evil person (for example, the thief) be killed'. If the aim of the rite is to procure childbirth, the priest afterwards goes to the woman, touches her with one of the bell-rods and gives her a little of the *cigbe*, which she must drink daily for four days. The barren woman will then hope to bear a child; and the person who had suffered injury at the hands of an unknown culprit will be assured that the latter will be killed by lightning—not at once or within a definite period, but surely some time in the future. The latter notion bears on a final duty of the *sogba* priest, which is to bury all persons killed by lightning and to perform the appropriate rites for these victims of divine punishment.

The children born after the intercession of the *kuti sogba* are tied to the cult for life. Immediately after the birth of the child the *Žigí* must be informed, so that he may in turn 'inform the *kuti*' by means of another sacrifice. Afterwards the *Žigí* presents the infant with a special charm in the form of a tiny dagger, which the child (and later the grown person) must always wear around the neck. Invariably, the child is given the name *Sogba*, and is generally referred to as *egi sogba*, 'child of *Sogba*'. If such a child falls ill, his parents will seek help, not from some other *kuti* or from professional medicine-men, but again from the *Žigí*, who does not charge for this further assistance: the child thus remains

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52
Gbari FF23

the responsibility of the *sogba* cult. Also, when such children grow up and marry they will as a matter of course invoke the *sogba* sacrifice, so that their union might be similarly blessed. The same idea, of the special protection enjoyed by *sogba* children, is expressed in this at first glance incongruous fashion: *sogba* children, even as adults, may help themselves with impunity to food and things of small value from any trader on the market. If we call this practice a 'licensed theft', we can see an oblique logical connection between this impunity and that other function of the cult, the punishment of thieves.

So much for the observances in the Gwari (or Nupe-Gwari) communities. The Nupe attitude towards the cult as such and towards the annual ceremonial is one of mild curiosity or indifference: they are, for the Nupe, merely the peculiar customs of 'foreigners'. Nor has the use of the *sogba* ritual for the purpose of inflicting supernatural punishment spread to the rest of the country. This may seem puzzling; for though the Nupe have their own ordeals to bring to justice criminals who deny their guilt, this method can only be applied when suspicion has already fastened upon a person; and though the Nupe possess their deadly *cigbe* against burglars and evil-wishers, these act merely as means of protection which must be acquired beforehand. As for the magic punishment of unknown offenders after the event, the supernatural armoury of Nupe appears to lack such means. Even so, this aspect of the *sogba* cult has not been utilized. I can suggest only this reason: such punishments after the event, placed within the power of the wronged person, come very close to personal vengeance; which is utterly foreign to the legal conceptions of the Nupe. As their elaborate judicial machinery precludes all secular self-help, so it would seem to preclude also this option of supernatural vengeance.

At the same time the Nupe in the neighbourhood of villages possessing the *sogba* cult claim that they now call in the *sogba* priest to bury persons killed by lightning. Since this obviously happens only rarely, the practice can have no great weight in the religious life of the people; nor can I be certain that it is followed regularly. Yet several Nupe sections, and not only those which have adopted this special burial custom, also share, if more vaguely, the Gwari belief that death by lightning may be a punishment for theft.[1] The Nupe who adopted the burial custom, then, have seized upon a religious practice which seemed to fit conveniently their own mystic ideas or fears.

The most thorough adoption concerns the use of the *sogba* ritual as a remedy for barrenness. Numerous Nupe women, from

[1] See above, p. 33.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

communities all over the country, have made the pilgrimage to the nearest shrine and priest, and numerous persons, both young and old, bear the tell-tale name *Sogba*. The degree to which the alien cult has taken root is best seen from a text on the practices surrounding childbirth which I recorded in Bida long before I knew anything about the *sogba* cult, and which contains this straightforward statement:

'If a woman has no child and she is a pagan, she would go and visit the place of *sogba*, she would go and pray for a child. The pagans have a hut with a *kuti* inside. The priest will translate (talk to the *kuti*) on behalf of the woman or man who come to visit the *sogba*. The priest receives money from the person who comes. If God agrees and that person has a child, it will be named *Sogba*. It will wear a charm round his neck, everybody seeing that person will know that he is a child of *sogba*.'

The traditional religious or quasi-religious practices of Nupe certainly do not lack 'cures' of sterility. If here a further magic treatment has been added to the numerous existing ones, this would seem to bear out the ever-visible desire for children. Nor do the religious conceptions of the people, which so readily allow for alternative practices and several trials, conflict with the desire behind this addition. But let us note this. Though the Nupe make use only of one particular feature or benefit of the alien cult and disregard its wider context (of which, in fact, they are mostly ignorant), this piecemeal adoption yet commits them to a radically changed outlook. For they accept, with the miraculous powers of *sogba*, also the tie forged between these powers and the beneficiary. And this whole idea, that an ordinary person can for life be dedicated to a *kuti* and stand under its protection, has no parallel in Nupe religion. The practical consequences of this dedication are neither burdensome nor very important; even so, they clash with the conventional way of looking at 'medicines' or *ad hoc* rituals as at so many expedients, solicited when one needs them, paid for, and then forgotten.

(iii) *Yoruba Influences*

Yoruba religion, the third on our list, has hardly touched Nupe. The elaborate cosmology of the Yoruba, their pantheon, and their effigies or idols had no influence upon the beliefs and practices of the Nupe. Nor has the *gugu* cult of the Yoruba settlers in Nupe found any response other than detached or amused interest.

There seem to be two exceptions. The first is exemplified in the bronze figures on Jebba Island which have been accepted as sacred

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

771 177 effigies and cult objects.[1] It is unlikely, incidentally, that these figures are Yoruba in origin; but they are of the same kind as the effigies of deities worshipped by the Yoruba. Now, the Nupe do not regard their figures as representations of deities; indeed the whole question, what or whom they represent, evokes no great interest. For the Nupe, the figures are merely 'likenesses' of a man and a woman (who is sometimes called the man's mother) and, more importantly, relics of Tsoede. Their possession is understood to be exceptional and indeed unique; and even though they figure prominently in one of the Jebba rituals, they do not add anything relevant to the purely religious conceptions. The images are simply the unusual objects of an unusual, 'royal' cult, but not more magically effective or possessed of special meaning because they happen to be shaped in human likeness.

The second exception is more important. In Mokwa and one or two villages in the river valley, we meet with a masked dance called *elo* (a meaningless word in Nupe), which is quite unlike any Nupe dance or ritual.[2] It does, however, somewhat resemble the Yoruba *gugu*, which equally occurs in Mokwa, not only in its paraphernalia but also in certain gestures and motions of the dancers. [538] The *elo* dancers wear long-sleeved hoods of coloured cloth cut like those worn in the *gugu* and cover their faces with coloured wooden masks, carved in grotesquely human features and surmounted by horns. The masks resemble those of the *gugu* only in that both are meant to represent a human face; but in the *gugu* the design is produced by cowrie shells sewn on to the cloth, while the *elo* type is reminiscent rather of the masks used by the southernmost sections of the Yoruba, or by the Ibo and other tribes in Southern Nigeria. The people who perform the *elo* know little about the origin of the masks or, indeed, of the whole ceremonial. It is said that Tsoede brought it from the south and established it in certain villages of his small river kingdom 'because he liked the dance so much that he wanted to see it again and again'. The masks now used are the work of the wood-carvers of Shonga (a mixed Yoruba-Nupe village on the Niger), though this particular skill has since disappeared; one or two masks are quite recent, having been made by a craftsman at Rabah who has preserved the old art. The hoods of cloth, on the other hand, are an innovation; in the youth of one

[1] As has been mentioned, similar figures, though both smaller and cruder, are found in Tada, another riverain village. What is said here about the Jebba figures equally applies to the Tada 'idols'.

[2] I recorded the *elo* in Mokwa, in Rabah (a few miles away on the river) and in Gbajibo, north of Jebba. In addition, smaller villages and hamlets in the neighbourhood, which do not themselves possess the *elo* masks, perform the dance annually with masks borrowed from Mokwa.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

of my Mokwa informants, a man of about sixty, the *elo* dancers used to wear skirts and cloaks made of dried grass, probably like those worn in the *mamma* ritual of Jebba; it was only later that the cloth hoods were adopted, 'because they looked nicer'. I have no doubt that they were modelled on the almost identical dress of the *gugu* dancers, with which the Mokwa people at least are so thoroughly familiar. They themselves disclaim any such connection, which is admittedly not borne out by any other features of the two cults.

Granting the alien origin of the *elo*, we must add that it has been fairly thoroughly Nupe-ized. To begin with, it has taken its place among the 'fixed' ceremonials, being performed annually in the 9th month (in Mokwa and Rabah) or 6th month (in Gbajibo). Like the other Nupe ceremonials, the *elo* is in the charge of one of the titled elders, whose office includes the responsibility for the annual performance and the tuition of the dancers. The most important mask, called *elokó* ('Great *elo*'), is also stored in his house, while the other masks and dresses are kept in the houses of other rankholders. When the masks appear in the dance they are addressed, in Nupe fashion, by a special salute, *eluló* ('Bird of *elo*'); the songs are in Nupe, the style of the music and most dance steps are typically Nupe, as are also the drums which are played throughout the dance.[1] But the dance performance itself has retained its uncommon character. All the dancers are men; but among them are three, wearing highly ornamented masks with curved twin horns, who are said to represent 'female' figures, the mask of the 'Great *elo*' belonging to this category. Two other dancers, wearing hoods pulled over their faces and head-dresses of feathers, are described as 'male'. Two more figures, wearing simple masks surmounted by one straight horn, are called *gara* (lit. 'robber'). These last figures are perhaps the most unusual; for while the 'male' and 'female' masks stalk about, or jump and dance much as do ordinary dancers or the masks in the *ndakó gboyá* and *mamma*, the *gara* plays the part of a bogey-man who frightens the children, and of a clown whose pranks delight old and young; which double role is otherwise unknown in Nupe dance ceremonial. The behaviour of the 'male' and 'female' masks, incidentally, is in no way suggestive of this ascription of sex. In addition, there are two unmasked young men who join in the dancing and clowning and wear fringed skirts made of leopard skin, their bare legs being painted with white spots ('like the spots of leopards')—another conspicuously non-Nupe feature.

The most incongruous aspect of the *elo* lies in its purpose, or

[1] The *elo* includes only one musical instrument uncommon in Nupe, an iron double-bell, beaten with a stick.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

771
177
535

rather in its absence of purpose. Although it has a definite date like other rituals and although the masks must dress in secrecy, there is nothing sacred about the performance. No sacrifice or ritual preparations precede or accompany it; and the *elo* is positively stated to be nothing like a *kuti*, but merely *dzodzo* 'play'. The dance seems to contain the remnants of some plot or dramatic theme; the various roles of 'male' and 'female' figures and of 'clowns' or 'robbers' can suggest nothing else. But again, the people deny that there is such a plot or that these 'roles' have any meaning. The *elo* songs, certainly, betray none. Here are a few of them, each consisting of a brief line which is endlessly repeated throughout the corresponding phase of the dance.

Zwákule, zwákule (meaningless).
I am calling Kolo (a name, here applied to *elo*),
he is coming slowly.
The *elo* matures every year.
They are calling Kolo, he swings his leg,
ebi du, ebi du (meaningless).
Every year we are making *elo*.
The *gara* appears, there is his face.

In a sense, the *elo* is a mixture of ritual and entertainment. But unlike the usual Nupe ceremonial, in which the ritual part precedes the 'play', the *elo* involves ritual only as it were in its administration (in the fixed date, the secret dressing-up of the actors, the formal apportionment of relevant duties); the rest is pure entertainment. Perhaps, in its original form, the *elo* was more fully a ceremonial, with some religious purpose as well as a plot. But even this the Nupe would deny; for although they sanctify the practice by ascribing it, in familiar manner, to the ancestor king, they impute to him no reasons other than (we might say) aesthetic ones. Nor have these reasons quite ceased to work. At the Bida *salla* in 1936 I saw a dancer with an unusual headdress which I had never seen before, neither at the previous *salla* nor on other occasions. The dancer himself was one of the *sorogi* dancers mentioned in a previous context;[1] but on his head he wore a brass cap with two horns. Subsequent enquiries elicited the fact that the headdress had been made by a Bida brass-smith to the specifications of the dancer: and the latter had meant to copy the horns of the *elo* masks which he had seen and admired in Mokwa.

771
177
561

(iv) *The Gani of Kutigi*

I have elsewhere described this cult and the manner in which it took root in Kutigi and the adjacent communities, so that I need

[1] See above, p. 188.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

only summarize the salient facts.[1] Unlike the *elo*, the *gani* can clearly be traced to its alien origin, and its importation into Nupe, by Moslem immigrants from the north, can even be dated with fair accuracy (having occurred probably about 1760–70). The Moslem character of the ceremonial is visible, above all, in the esoteric part, which takes the form of a symbolic burial in the Mohammedan manner; it is further emphasized by the often voiced claim that the whole ceremonial represents an observance of Islam, namely, the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet—a claim which has little validity.[2] Even so, the *gani* has been firmly adopted also by the pagan population and, what is more important, has been adopted as a ritual or at least as a ceremonial of serious and sacred import. Yet in calling the *gani* a ritual or ceremonial I am stating my own conclusions, couched in our conventional terminology. The Nupe have no suitable name for this performance which has many aspects of a ritual act without conforming to a 'ritual' as the pagans understand it. They all emphasize that it is not a *kuti*; but neither do they call it *dzodzo*, mere 'play', in spite of the great scope given to mummery, display, crude pranks, and merry-making generally. They either use the non-committal term *nya'nya*, 'dancing', or simply argue that 'the *gani* is the *gani*', that is, unlike any other tribal festivity. Linguistic usage, it seems, has not quite caught up with this novel and ambiguous species of ceremonial.

The *gani* ceremonial has for its main theme the periodical reconstitution of the village age-grade associations, that is, the acceptance of novices into the first grade and the promotion of older boys and youths to higher grades. These corporate promotions go hand in hand with a reshuffling of the various ranks held in each age-grade association, and hence with an upgrading or downgrading of its members. If the age grades thus appear dominated by competition and the notions of rank and career, they merely mirror as well as anticipate interests paramount in Nupe political life. As I phrased it elsewhere, age-grade life serves as an 'education for citizenship';[3] and this aspect too is given expression in the *gani* ceremonial, together with other ideas of more general import, bearing on growth and maturity.

In the ceremonial each age grade is assigned a specific role, acting under its leader, who bears the title *Ndakotsu*—'Grandfather of

[1] See 'The Gani Ritual of Nupe' *Africa*, vol. XIX, 1949.

[2] This is clearly shown by the discrepancy in the dates. The Birth of the Prophet (*Ma'ulid*) falls on the twelfth day of the first lunar month of the Mohammedan calendar (in 1934 the 29th March), while the *gani* celebrations start on the tenth day of the 4th month in Nupe reckoning (in 1934, the 25th June).

[3] See *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 383 *et seq.*

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

771 the king'. Thus led, the age grades walk in procession through the
177 village to salute the chief and all the other notables of the com-
561 munity, join in the dancing, engage in wrestling matches, and meet one another in a realistic 'battle', to be described presently. The esoteric rite of the *gani*, the 'burial service' mentioned before, is performed by the leaders alone, in a secret place away from the scene of the public festivities. The younger boys are all dressed up as girls and imitate, in exaggerated and ridiculous fashion, the walk and dance steps of the women. This masquerade, though highly elaborate and considered a most relevant aspect of the celebration, is not further explained; but the context makes it clear that it carries the same meaning of a change of roles which underlies the similar mummery of the *gunnu*.[1] For this meaning is again expressed, now by means of a conspicuous symbolism which everyone understands, in certain other episodes of the *gani*, meant to dramatize the admission of the novices and the various promotions from grade to grade. There is the 'death and burial', loudly mourned by the crowd, of a 'little girl', indicating the abandonment of infancy by the young boys about to enter the first grade. In a preceding phase a 'little boy' is similarly buried and mourned, that is, shown to abandon boyhood for adolescence. Lastly, the youths of the most senior grade appear dressed up as 'warriors' and 'horsemen', meeting their juniors in a mock battle which seems to symbolize the final stage of adolescence, when youth must hold its own against adults, compete and struggle with them, and break into their ranks. All these things actually happen in the 'battle', whose very realism seems symbolic of the severe competition for position and power which characterizes Nupe life. In brief, the *gani* ceremonial is a typical *rite de passage*, dramatizing the crucial phases of male adolescence and adoption into manhood. Seen against this background, an ususual feature of the *gani*, too, falls into place. Obscene sexual jokes and allusions, normally never used, appear in the *gani* songs and are freely bandied about during the festivities, both by old and young: we may conclude that they serve to throw into relief a final aspect of adolescence, sexual maturity.

771 The ceremonial lasts three days, and each day concludes with a
177 hectic dance in which the sexes meet in utterly unrestrained
786 fashion. Nor does this unrestraint end with the dance; for during
561 the three nights all the normal rules of sex morality are in abeyance. This temporary abandonment of moral restraint, which applies to every person in the community, implies, of course, more than merely a symbolic reference to adolescence and sexual maturity. It represents one of those periodical concessions to moral

[1] See above, p. 113.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

or sexual licence which are familiar from many societies, primitive and advanced. We know that they occur also in the traditional annual celebration of the *gunnu*. And here it seems significant that the people of Kutigi and the other communities now performing the *gani* have abandoned the *gunnu* in this fixed, annual form.[1] Whatever other reasons have contributed to the abandonment of the annual *gunnu*, the fact that it shared with the *gani* this one feature may well have been decisive; for it would seem to be in the very nature of this concession to unrestraint that it must not be duplicated.

There is evidence to show that the sexual licence belonged to the *gani* already in its original form in which it reached Nupe country. This original *gani* equally included some connection, apparently broad and unspecific, with age-grade life and male adolescence.[2] To some extent, then, the Nupe found in the *gani* a cult fortuitously congenial to their own interests and ideas. But let us note that the *gani* expresses them with unaccustomed sharpness: the masquerade of boys as girls, sketchily treated in the *gunnu*, is fully exploited in the *gani*; and nowhere else is age-grade life dramatized with such effect.

Other 'Nupeisms' in the *gani* are clearly the result of adaptation and remodelling. Thus, though the ceremonial retained its original name, its songs and prayers are in Nupe; the latter, spoken at the secret 'burial service', conclude with the typical Nupe formula—'May the whole town have health'; the musical instruments, the music itself, the dance steps, and the whole design of the ceremonial, with an esoteric part preceding the public 'merry-making'—all these are taken from the traditional practice. Yet equally, the *gani* contains conspicuously novel and 'un-Nupe' features. The very notion of a ceremonial having a proper plot and being staged as a drama with consecutive scenes has no parallel in Nupe. The same is true of the precise symbolism of the *gani* and of the masquerade of warriors and horsemen; the latter, incidentally, appear as riders of hobby-horses, which mummery is equally unknown in the rest of Nupe. So are the standards with which the age grades parade during the ceremonial, some of which are combined with crude symbols of the sexes. The open eroticism of the *gani*, finally, contrasts strikingly with the normal mood of Nupe ceremonials.

[1] See above, p. 83. It will be remembered that the performance of the *gunnu* as a movable rite (which is still practised in Kutigi) does not include the 'mixed' dance and the period of erotic licence.

[2] The evidence in question is based on accounts of the *gani* celebrations in its country of origin and among the nomadic Fulani. See *Africa*, vol. XIX, 1949, p. 177, n. 2.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

Let me stress that the 'congenial' aspects of the *gani* did not cause it to be simply accepted into the ceremonial repertoire of Nupe; nor do its 'uncongenial' features represent merely unassimilated remnants. In a sense both such a straightforward acceptance and complete assimilation were precluded by the circuitous manner in which the *gani* was adopted and which was meant to preserve rather than to obliterate its alien character. Here I must explain that the community where the *gani* took root represents, on a small scale, a composite or 'plural' society. It is composed of three distinct sections—the Bornu immigrants (called *Benu*); a group of hereditary hunters (*ndaceži*); and a group claiming the status of aboriginal inhabitants and calling themselves 'Owners of the Land' (*kintsoži*). In this heterogeneous community the alien provenance of the *gani* ceremonial remained intact; its esoteric rites are performed only by members of the immigrant group, and the whole *gani* is still, for the people of Kutigi, an observance unequivocally 'belonging to' or 'owned' by that section, even though all others join in the public celebrations. They in turn remained the 'owners' of their own traditional cults, the *žikinta* (performed by the group of hunters) and the *gunnu* (performed, as a movable rite, by the *kintsoži*). But in performing its proper ceremonial each congregation acts on behalf of the whole composite community; and all three ceremonials are considered indispensable, in a supernatural sense and in their diverse ways, for the well-being of that wider group. The *gani*, therefore, came to be adopted, not through simply diffusing to the other sections, but through being acknowledged by them as a vital contribution which its 'owners' can make to the common weal. The sectional 'ownership', in other words, was transformed into a sectional 'task', and the divided congregation, into a religious division of labour.[1]

It is clear that this manner of adoption is adjusted to the particular problems of a 'plural society', helping to maintain or buttress its precarious, divided unity. And other societies, facing the same problems, have evolved much the same solution. Yet though the religious division of labour has this very wide application, it may be pointed out that, in Nupe, it remains 'congenial' to the character of the religious system; for it only develops further the ideas underlying Nupe priestship and the Nupe form of ritual, 'owned' by kin groups but operating for the 'common weal'.

[1] Let me note briefly that the same conception reappears, somewhat modified, in the attitude of the Nupe people at large towards the *gani*, which they regard as the 'possession' of the people of Kutigi. This aspect, which has been fully treated in the article mentioned above, is not relevant to the present discussion.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

2. ON MOTIVES

We turn to our crucial problem, the motives underlying these adoptions and rejections of alien observances. Since in our examples both responses were voluntary, not imposed by extraneous pressure or constraint, we may legitimately argue that the acceptance must have rested upon some appeal, some kind of pull, which the novel practice exercised upon the recipients-to-be, and the rejection upon the lack of such an appeal or perhaps its opposite. This 'appeal' or 'pull' is clearly a complex thing. First and foremost, it is a pull of interest; in other words, we may search for some specific interest or 'need' pre-existing in the recipient culture, which the novel practice seems capable (or incapable) of satisfying.[1] The relevant factor, however, is not the pre-existing interest or need as such, but a residual interest or need; what we must show is not so much that the society is deeply concerned over such-and-such issues (for example, the fecundity of women) but that this concern is unsatisfied even where it is met by pre-existing institutions. The *gugu* ceremonial, for example, answers interests strongly pronounced in Nupe life in the fixed rituals promising communal well-being, and in the ritualization of death; but since a series of traditional ceremonials profess the same aims, the residual interest must be small, if it is felt at all. The concern over childbirth, on the other hand, is by its nature such that it would always remain active and press for additional promises or safeguards.

The concern or aim of the alien observance may obviously be expressed in a form more or less novel and unprecedented; and the degree of novelty must clearly itself affect the ease of adoption. But this effect is difficult to assess. Often, we shall no doubt argue that, the more novel a practice, the more uncongenial must it be to people still thinking in terms of traditional ways of acting; so that the novelty would act as a brake upon the free play of interests, as a counter-pull as it were. Yet we cannot exclude the possibility that the novelty of the practice will help rather than hinder the adoption; for its 'uncongenial' form may itself correspond to some pre-existing interest, that is, to a diffuse desire for unusual and unprecedented experiences. Now all the alien religious practices which the Nupe have adopted contain some 'uncongenial' or unprecedented features. Shall we then say that the latter must have exercised a certain appeal in their own right? Perhaps—though

[1] The term 'pre-existing' is here used in a somewhat loose sense, without the implication of precise chronological evidence. It implies, however, that the interest or need in question can be established independently, that is, can be shown to obtain apart from the adopted (or rejected) practice.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

the same lack of congeniality also characterizes the practices which have been rejected. Or shall we assume that, for the adoption to occur, the pre-existing interest must have outweighed the uncongenial character, while in the case of rejected practices the balance was the other way? There is evidence for this. The *gani*, with all its alien elements, clearly answers powerful pre-existing interests, and indeed improves upon the respective traditional institutions; the *gugu*, conversely, has nothing of the kind to offer: it is only another fixed ritual, duplicating the aims of the traditional rites, so that, apart from being uncongenial in form, it also appears redundant in content. The *bori* could answer at least a weak pre-existing need, since it offers a cure for lunacy of which the Nupe are deficient; yet it also clashes utterly with their religious beliefs and, above all, with the psychological tenor of their religious life. The *sogba* cult seems to exemplify this balance between interest and congeniality even more clearly. For the Nupe adopted only that aspect of it which corresponds to a strongly pronounced and in a sense inexhaustible interest (in fecundity), while rejecting both the annual ceremonial, whose aims seem redundant, and the *sogba* ordeal, which was altogether alien to the pre-existing aims or interests. Much the same is true of the bronze figures of Tsoede, which were embodied in Nupe ritual only as emblems of kingship, without any of the features normally implicit in the worship of 'idols'.

Let us be clear that this assessment of a balance between interests and congeniality holds only with two provisos. First, it is largely based on *ex post facto* arguments. The *gani*, for example, fits a 'pre-existing need' only in the form in which it exists today. If we judge this affinity of interest to be sufficiently great to have outweighed the uncongenial features we do so because in the event the latter proved no insuperable obstacle; but we cannot be certain how much remodelling, of content and purpose as well as of form, has gone into the acceptance. Nor can we say that the *bori* or *gugu* would have proved incapable of such remodelling. All we can really say is that no such attempts have been made. Have they not been made because there was no sufficiently strong interest to make the effort worthwhile? Again we can only answer—perhaps; for the *elo* would seem to contradict this argument. There, an uncongenial practice has been fitted into Nupe life for no apparent 'need' at all, unless we are prepared to consider the addition of a pleasurable (and novel) occasion a felt 'need'. And if we do so, the mummery of the *gugu* and the unusual dance of the *bori* would seem similarly acceptable.

Secondly, our arguments hold only if other factors in the situation can safely be neglected; and of one of these, the relationship

2. Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

between the potential donors and recipients, this cannot be assumed *ab initio*. Rather, this factor must be added as a likely third determinant of adoption or rejection. Surveying our data from this new angle we meet with a wide variety of situations. The *elo*, the Tsoede 'idols', and the *sogba* cult were adopted strictly from outside, without any corresponding fusion or integration of the 'owners' with the recipient groups. But here a further distinction must be drawn: while the Tsoede idols and the *elo* were taken over from fully distinct and in fact unknown donors, the *sogba* was found among neighbours and was 'taken over' only in the sense in which people turn to some promising, if otherwise unfamiliar, place of pilgrimage. Furthermore, the 'owners' of the *sogba* cult, viewed with Nupe eyes, occupied the inferior position of a conquered 'slave' population. Perhaps, then, the barrier of status was readily overcome only in the case of the fertility ritual, with its strong affinity of interest, while in the case of the other aspects of the cult it added to the 'counter-pulls' which made for their rejection.

The *gani*, *gugu*, and *bori* represent observances adopted or rejected in circumstances which involved the fusion or integration of donor and recipient groups. But again, the conditions differ in relevant respects. The Pornu and Yoruba immigrants arrived *en bloc*, maintained themselves as compact groups, and were thus integrated, as segments, in the host communities; the Hausa colony in the cosmopolitan city grew haphazardly, as the result of the irregular immigration of individuals of all classes and occupations, and never achieved internal cohesion; it only fused amorphously with the host community, but was not integrated in it. The kind of adoption, therefore, which turned the *gani* into a 'sectional task' was neither feasible nor called for in the case of the *bori*. It might, on the other hand, conceivably have worked in the case of the Yoruba ritual, even though this cult answers no 'residual' need. But here we must consider that the Yoruba came to Nupe, not as immigrants claiming equal status (as did the Benu), nor yet as free immigrants, but as prisoners of war freed and settled by royal command. Whatever the effect of the other 'pulls' in this rank-conscious society, the barrier of status must have weighed heavily on the side of rejection. Admittedly, it did so effectively only as regards the cult as such; minor features, such as the dress of the dancers which reappears in the *elo*, were adopted across the barrier, for their aesthetic attraction and novelty. Yet the barrier has at least prevented this 'borrowing' being acknowledged.

In brief, the acceptance or rejection of the alien observances involves the efficacy of several conditions and results from their

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

varying combination and interplay. I have tried to tabulate the relevant data in the form of a synoptic chart capable of exhibiting the multiple correlations. The features listed are those discussed above, plus and minus signs indicating their presence and absence respectively. I also attempted to grade the interests satisfied by the various cults by doubling the plus signs in the appropriate cases; a similar grading of 'congeniality' seemed irrelevant in the light of the final result.

	(I) *Integration of donors and recipients*	(SD) *Status distinction operating against donors*	(C) *Congeniality of form*	(SI) *Satisfaction of interest*	*Outcome*
bori	−	±	−	+ (as therapeutic measure)	Rejection
gugu	+	+	−	+ ? (pleasurable novelty)	Rejection
gani	+	−	−	++	Adoption
sogba (fertility cult)	−	+	−	++	Adoption
(general cult)	−	+	−	−	Rejection
elo	−	−	−	+ ? (pleasurable novelty)	Adoption
Tsoede idols	−	−	−	++	Adoption

In other words, adoption (of a voluntary kind) occurred when

$$I^{\pm} \ldots SD^{\pm} \ldots C^{-} \ldots SI^{++}$$

and when

$$I^{-} \ldots SD^{-} \ldots C^{-} \ldots SI^{+}.$$

That a strong interest should outweigh the absence of congeniality and render the factor of integration irrelevant is hardly surprising; but it is puzzling that this should be true also where the interest appears to be small and even uncertain (as in the *elo*). Perhaps, then, we have underrated the residual 'need'? If so, it must have sprung from some inadequacy in the pleasures and excitements afforded in the pre-existing situation. Although this

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

assumption cannot, for obvious reasons be fully substantiated, it is not altogether unwarranted. Mokwa and the other communities practising the *elo* are in fact poor in ceremonials offering, apart from occasions for worship, also the purely pleasurable stimulations of dancing, singing, and conviviality; for while most Nupe communities have two or three ceremonials of this kind, Mokwa has only one apart from the *elo*—the *gunnu*,—the remaining rituals being sober esoteric sacrifices, unaccompanied by music, dancing, and public 'merry-making'.[1] We mentioned in a previous context that the number of fixed ceremonials is fairly uniform throughout Nupe;[2] we may now add that the proportion of ceremonials of such combined appeal is similarly uniform. This I take to indicate that the Nupe need for regular pleasurable stimulations has as it were found its own level. Which would mean, further, that Mokwa and the other communities were only balancing a psychological deficit when they adopted the *elo*. Certainly, several of the communities which exhibit the normal Nupe level of ceremonial-*cum*-pleasurable occasions had an equal chance of embracing the *elo* or of copying the similar *gugu*, but have not done so. So that the adoption, by a few groups, of the alien ceremonial for no motive other than that of adding another festivity did yet answer an unsatisfied 'need'.

But let us note a final source of error. We have spoken of the 'pre-existing' interests or needs as though they were bound to be constant, the measure of their satisfaction alone being variable. It is conceivable that this assumption is unwarranted, and that the adoption of the new observance reflects, not a pre-existing interest unsatisfied, but an interest strengthened owing to some change in social conditions. As regards the *elo* and *sogba*, there is no evidence to support this alternative hypothesis. It is, however, borne out in the case of the *gani*. This ceremonial, as I put it before, improves upon the traditional Nupe institutions which ritualize adolescence and age-grade life; it dramatizes these events in a specific and detailed manner where the equivalent traditional ceremonial, the *gunnu*, merely deals summarily with the transition from youth to adulthood, embodying it as one aspect among others in its design. Now, though the age grades have undoubtedly always served to mirror the dominant interests of Nupe life, in rank and in promotion in status, the interests themselves must have gained in

[1] The same is true of Rabah, though there Mohammedan influence has today obliterated the *gunnu*. Gbajibo, the third community practising the *elo*, has two other ceremonials which combine religious with generally pleasurable stimulations, the *gunnu* and the *mamma*; but the latter is celebrated in secrecy, by the men alone, and only as a movable ritual.

[2] See above, p. 70.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

importance with the growth of the Fulani Emirate. As the latter gave greater impetus to desires for a political career and imparted greater severity to the competition for rank and status, so the age grades assumed a novel, and more weighty, significance. With this, the fuller and more specific ritual elaboration of adolescence seems entirely consistent. It was not so that the pre-existing desire to give ritual elaboration to important things had been inadequately expressed; rather, things became important in a new way: so that, when the Nupe adopted the *gani* ceremonial, they were seizing upon a chance to express a changed outlook and a desire reoriented.

As we shall see, the more far-reaching conversion to Islam similarly involves such changing interests and newly emerged trends. Are then, perhaps, any trends visible in Nupe today which may in future lead to further adoptions of alien practices? I will hazard this prediction. The pressure of competition and the obsession with promotion in status, grown strongest in the capital, are visibly leading to anxieties and frustrations, and to mental instability. The incidence of neurotic disorders seems to bear out this tendency, though inadequate records forbid a more definite statement.[1] The mass hysteria of the witchcraft trial mentioned before offers clearer evidence. Such increased tensions may well seek relief in some form of self-abandonment: the *bori* possession cult seems to offer precisely this chance, which might one day be seized upon, its 'uncongenial' appeal notwithstanding.

3. THE CHARACTER OF TRIBAL RELIGION

The preceding discussion referred only to the adoption of isolated practices and items of belief but made no mention of individuals or communities wholly converted to an alien pagan creed. Nor is this unexpected. The religions of pre-literate peoples are not normally of a proselytizing kind. They promise no particular reward to the converted, nor do they place any premium on the conversion of others. Indeed, it seems true to say that this issue never arises, for, as we anticipated, primitive religion is essentially a tribal or national religion, conceived of as inseparable from the particular identity of the group professing it. Expressed differently, primitive religion does not constitute a 'church' which exists in its own right and can be entered (or left) solely by reason of its creed and of the transcendental benefits promised to the believers.[2]

[1] See *A Black Byzantium*, p. 402.

[2] Durkheim's famous identification of 'religion' (of any form) with a 'church' seems to me to rest on an arbitrary use of the latter term; for whatever else may be meant by a 'church', it must mean 'a community organized

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

No machinery therefore exists to deal with such contingencies— no provision for tuition of the converts-to-be, and no formal procedure of admission or perhaps excommunication. To say it again, that sum-total of beliefs and practices we call Nupe, Yoruba, or Gwari religion, is simply the religion of the people who, on other grounds also, call themselves Nupe, Yoruba, or Gwari; and though it is possible for single observances or even items of belief (such as the belief in the significance of death by lightning) to be adopted or 'borrowed', the notion that the religion as a whole can be exported or changed for another is inconceivable.

This self-sufficiency of the Nupe faith goes together with a marked detachment and tolerance towards other creeds. The Nupe, as we know, are greatly interested in discussing the religions of others; but they do so dispassionately, and indeed think it possible that the radically different beliefs of their neighbours are justifiable and, in a vague sense, as 'right' as their own. The coexistence of widely varying practices in Nupe itself must have helped in fostering this tolerance towards alien beliefs; certainly, any person showing such tolerance is not for that reason considered an apostate or even a doubter. The Nupe creed simply lays little claim to any exclusive possession of spiritual truth. Yet it is not for that reason less securely held. If the Nupe do not argue that their creed is the best of all possible creeds, neither do they question that, for them, it is simply given, as is their language and all the other features that go with 'being a Nupe'. Their detached tolerance thus seems only the obverse of this self-sufficiency of 'tribal' religions.

The fact that alien observances are sometimes adopted for their apparent utility or some other attraction is not felt to be inconsistent with this notion of a 'given' tribal religion; at least, the inconsistency is corrected by tacitly granting that alien practices could yet 'become Nupe', that is, could be added to those which, at that stage, were indicative of the social identity. The accomplished fact, then, re-establishes the *status quo*; the new religious practice, now regularly executed by a population which by numerous other criteria regards itself as one, as 'the Nupe', becomes itself 'of Nupe'; so that the people can again detachedly view 'alien' observances or beliefs. Let me restate this in more general terms. The conscious identity of Nupe, as of any society, comes from the awareness of a large stable array of modes of behaviour understood to be typical of the society; any single

by officials into an institution which bestows gifts of grace' (on all who seek it), which makes 'the sacred generally 'accessible', and under whose authority members can be 'enrolled' (see Max Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions', *Essays in Sociology*, p. 288).

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

change in this array does not alter the continued consciousness of identity, but is subsumed in it.

This is, of course, a familiar situation, which ultimately accounts for the continuity (or continued self-awareness) of societies even when their cultural possessions, or for that matter their populations, change. Much will depend on the gradualness and restricted scope of the change; a sudden change in which new modes of behaviour greatly outweigh the 'array' of pre-existing ones may disrupt the continued identity. But it need not always do so. For the process just outlined may also be reversed: the society facing such far-reaching changes may yet fasten on to some particular cultural possession which remained unchanged, and consider it sufficiently relevant to furnish a criterion or symbol of the continued identity. Often, as we know, a creed or some religious observance preserved amidst the changes will prove to have this relevance.

This process, too, can be observed among the Nupe, among the colony of emigrants in Lagos, who have lost nearly every feature of culture, including language, which would normally sustain that awareness of 'being Nupe' or 'still being Nupe'. But they have preserved one traditional cult, the *gunnu*; and they still regard themselves as Nupe (calling themselves either Nupe or, more often, Takpa or Tapa, by the Yoruba name). The two things go together; in discussions, when the people wish to emphasize their tribal identity, they at once mention the possession of this cult which, to them, seems decisive.

Let me say a few words about the Nupe colony in Lagos. It numbers perhaps 5,000 people, both scattered over the outlying hamlets and villages and occupying a special quarter in the city of Lagos.[1] The Nupe settlement is claimed to be of considerable antiquity, going back to the Portuguese era, and to have attained its present important and honoured position towards the end of the last century, when the self-made head of the Lagos Nupe, a certain Gana and a 'noted warrior', was elevated to high rank by the Yoruba town king. This Gana, who incidentally was taken to England to be presented to Queen Victoria, was the grandfather of the present chief of the Lagos Nupe, a man of about seventy. Gana's rank, *Osode*, is still held by his descendants, and with the rank goes the priestship of the *gunnu*, which Gana had somehow assumed. The Lagos *gunnu* is a combination of three rites all subsumed under the same name, the *gunnu* itself, the *ndakó gboyá*, and the ritual of the Chain of Tsoede, the paraphernalia of the three

[1] The Nupe quarter in Lagos is known to everyone; its main thoroughfares are called *Tapa Street* and *Osode Street*, the latter deriving its name from the title held by the head of the Nupe colony (see below).

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

rites being stored in the 'House of Osode'. Here, too, the crucial ceremonials take place. For though each Nupe hamlet or village in Lagos Colony performs its own rites and several of them possess their own paraphernalia, the ceremonial in the 'House of Osode' comes first and gives the signal for the other performances. Thus the scattered groups of immigrants are held together through being mobilized in the common religious activity, while the Nupe in Lagos Town form a single congregation in the strict sense of the word. The religious rites thus preserved are therefore more than merely a symbol of tribal identity: they also make this identity concretely effective, that is, turn a group aware of itself into one effectively co-operating, if only on one, crucial and impressive occasion.

As regards the rites themselves, they are full of distortions and unorthodox innovations, due partly to the adaptation of the cult to the urban conditions and partly to genuine misunderstandings, linguistic and otherwise.[1] Yoruba influence, too, is visible, in certain anthropomorphisms which have crept into the interpretation of the *ndakó gboyá*. Altogether, the latter has come to overshadow completely the *gunnu* rites proper: the masks, of which there are seven, are now of two kinds, tall ones representing 'fathers', and smaller ones representing 'sons'; while the *ndakó gboyá* as such, far from being understood as an impersonal force, is positively stated to be a male spirit, and is even given a 'wife', symbolized by an upturned pot half-buried in the ground.

But not all the innovations represent merely errors or distortions of a fortuitous and unwitting kind. Three in particular express the new significance attaching to this ceremonial of a group in exile. First, the cult society of the *ndakó gboyá* has been remodelled into a secret society in the strict sense of the word, rigidly organized, and having its lodges in every Nupe village on the coast. Its head is the *Osode*; its members must be Nupe by paternal descent; and initiation is both difficult and expensive, though once it is achieved it remains hereditary. For the people, the *ndakó gboyá* society is unequivocally, and impressively, a piece of 'Nupedom'. If it is difficult to enter the society, this only means that it has come to represent something like an inner ring or élite among those who can call themselves Nupe; and if the *ndakó gboyá* society is now so planned that it includes every Nupe settlement and perpetuates itself by hereditary succession, this makes it another support of tribal identity.

[1] Thus the dance of the young men is called *gunnu ba*, which really means 'place of the *gunnu*', and the courtyard where the esoteric part of the rite takes place is called *kuso*, 'bush'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

We must note, secondly, that all the Lagos Nupe, without exception, are today Moslems. Oddly enough, they claim to be good Moslems, even though they openly and proudly 'own' the *gunnu* and the other pagan rites. Yet the people see no conflict between the faith they now profess and their adherence to the pagan cults. The two are kept in separate compartments: the Moslem faith belongs to the present; the pagan observances are a token of a past one wishes to continue: they simply go with remaining a Nupe. And if the pagan observances are also supernaturally effective, this seems almost incidental to that other, more relevant, import, of offering occasions to act as Nupe.

Finally, when the Lagos Nupe perform the public episodes of their cults, they do so in the same circumstances in which the alien enclaves in Nupe country stage their religious observances. The *gunnu* and *ndakó gboyá* are watched with keen interest by the whole native population of Lagos; above all, the Nupe 'owners' of the ceremonials are expected to perform them for the well-being of 'the whole town', including the Yoruba, and occasionally at the request of the Yoruba town chief, if some calamity (for example, witchcraft) threatens the population. Here, then, we meet with the exact counterpart of that 'religious division of labour' which turned a cult alien in Nupe into a contribution to the common weal. But the conception of the 'common weal' has been significantly widened; for the prayer formula of the Lagos ceremonials contains a new phrase—'May the whole of Nupe country prosper'. This is clearly a further expression of that 'awareness of social identity', kept alive by a tribe in exile; indeed, no more convincing expression can be conceived than this concern with the welfare of the distant mother country.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The absence, in Nupe, of complete conversions to an alien creed has a notable exception in the steady expansion of Islam. Paradoxically, though the Nupe in strange parts preserve their traditional religion because it is so much the symbol of tribal identity, in Nupe country itself that religion is disappearing. And unlike the Lagos Moslems, who keep Islam and the traditional observances apart, the Nupe in their own country have accepted 'conversion' in all its implications, including the rejection of the earlier creed. Perhaps this is no paradox. For while the emigrants have only their religion to fall back on if they wish to prove to themselves that they are still Nupe, in their own country this issue does not arise. There, Nupe social identity is still sustained by that wider 'stable array' of social facts—unbroken occupation

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

532
794

28. Mask of the 'Great *elo*'

532
535
177

29. Dancer at the Bida *salla* with headdress modelled on the *elo* mask

[p. 230 (1)]

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

of the same territory; political autonomy; and numerous norms of behaviour and types of relationship.

With all this the next chapter will deal. Let me here only explain an apparent omission; if this discussion made no mention of that other religion demanding complete conversion, Christianity, the reason is, simply, the unimportance of Christianity in Nupe life. The number of converts is extremely small and the progress of Christianity insignificant. The Nupe generally are not hostile to those who have become Christians; they do not subject them to special disabilities; nor do they despise them; only mallams will sometimes call Christians, contemptuously, *káfiri*, 'unbelievers'. Here, too, the general attitude is one of tolerance, though it is more pronounced among pagans than among Moslems. The former (including nominal Moslems) quite often send their children to mission schools, and most Nupe keep on friendly terms with missionaries or African evangelists. But this tolerance always goes with the conviction that Christian missionizing will remain ineffectual; friendliness with Christians is unobjectionable only because it is of no consequence. Nor do the Nupe ever commit themselves by their association with Christians. They do not intermarry with Christian converts; they do not ask them to their family feasts; and the converts never come from solid, stable families, but from among unattached individuals—old people without relations, young orphans, or the children of strangers. Even among these, I was told, apostasy often occurs in later life. And here it is not the pagan religion which is the greatest rival of Christianity, but the steadily encroaching Islam.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

across the barrier of religion. The following comments by the chief of Pichi illustrate perhaps the extreme of Nupe tolerance, 'There are three benefits', he said, 'Islam, Christianity, and the *kuti*. Some of us have chosen one, others the other. One may be stronger than the rest: but this we do not know.' To be sure, this tolerance cuts both ways; and indeed, this Nupe version of Lessing's Nathan saw nothing strange in 'making *salla*' and attending the *gunnu* as well. But then, he was only a self-professed Moslem, whom others considered a pagan at heart.

Yet, though his attitude may not be typical of the Nupe Moslems, it is typical of the outlook of the people among whom Islam finds its converts. The final step of conversion changes it but little; indeed, it can hardly be otherwise since conversion is so loose an affair and not a real 'step' at all. But in so far as the outlook of the confirmed Moslem is changed, carrying with it that pride and awareness of superiority, the pride and superiority are social rather than specifically religious. What counts is, first and foremost, the assimilation to upper-class culture, and only secondarily the deliverance from unbelief.

5. CONTACT AND INTEGRATION

In this chapter we were dealing with instances of a much-discussed social process, 'culture contact' or 'acculturation'. The wider theoretical issues involved are beyond our present scope; but no discussion of this kind can avoid touching upon one such general problem, namely, the relationship between the cultures brought into 'contact' and the 'resultant' culture emerging from it. Now, this is a question of end-states, of the final outcome of these processes of change and contact; and logically, we should start with their analysis.

The physical model of 'contact', of a 'clash of cultures', or of their 'impact' upon one another, is more misleading than helpful when picturing these processes. We revert, therefore, to our paradigm, a group possessed of given modes of behaviour, habit patterns if you like, which comes to face new models of behaviour of such-and-such pull or attractiveness. That the reactions are likely to be complex and intricate no one will deny; more importantly, they are progressive, that is, take the form of chain reactions. It is clearly not so that the new models are simply accepted, rejected, or exchanged for the habitual ways of acting as it were once and for all, after which no further readjustment will occur. The religious conversion of a people certainly is not a simple all-or-none affair, but a process of many stages in which an initial acceptance may spread further, be deepened or changed in

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

177 some other way, and an initial rejection might similarly be modified. My point is that this is not a coherent process moving towards completion, in which a given goal exercises an unvarying 'pull' and steadily gains over the counter-pull of traditional norms; rather, the process is piecemeal, determined by pulls and strains that emerge stage by stage and only operate from one stage to the next.

It might be argued that the Nupe do have before them the 'given goal', namely, the complete observances of Islam as they are taught by its missionaries and practised by the confirmed Moslems. But as we know, the Nupe often resort to half-measures and compromises. Let us not dismiss these as preliminary steps or instances of 'cultural lag'. They clearly represent attempts at reconciling, at a particular stage, the pulls and counter-pulls of customary and novel observances. But no ideal or permanent balance is calculable in advance, partly because the social strains set up by any change in the customary observances will not at once be visible, and partly because the 'pull' of the new models does not remain constant.

The people who accept one or the other new model of behaviour cannot at once assess all the implications of acceptance. They may understand roughly (though even this need not be true) that, say, worship of *Allah* and the observances of *kuti* are mutually exclusive, so that accepting the former must mean abandoning the latter; but they cannot anticipate certain more remote consequences entailed, for example, in the lack of emphasis, in Moslem ceremonial, on paternal authority, in the absence of specific assurances on the productivity of the land, or in the character of the new congregation which no longer coincides with the village community. Yet these consequences will eventually be felt, as strains of one kind or other and as problems requiring solution. The solution can only be achieved by further changes, either through readjusting the pre-existing modes of behaviour or through turning once more to the new model. Stated somewhat crudely, cultural change, once it makes the first breach, is carried on by its own momentum. But we must note that the 'pull' of the new model is itself altered in the process; for any previous response to it, entailing as it does strains and instability, also alters the way in which the people will now view the model, as a solution for hitherto non-existing difficulties, or as itself requiring remodelling. Thus adoption of Moslem inheritance follows logically when Moslem ceremonial (among other things) fails to sustain paternal authority; and Moslem worship is at some stage remodelled to recover the direct appeal to the deity for rain and fertility.

But these processes cannot really be reduced to a precise chronological sequence, the multiplicity of motives effective at any stage forbidding such a reconstruction. Nor can we isolate any first step,

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

forced upon the people, from others that followed spontaneously. What was forced upon the people was essentially a total situation, at once political, economic, and religious; any step may be the first, nor need the others follow immediately.[1] Only theoretically can we conclude that they all hang together, though occasionally we can trace the nexus more firmly, even into the future, towards adjustments yet to come.

Let me illustrate this on an example bearing on the widest efficacy of Islam, its very success in proselityzing the Nupe. Coming as it did as a religion of conquerors and ruling class, it both endorsed the social barrier and provoked attempts at overcoming it. In keeping conversion loose and easy, and in utilizing the emphasis on learning, which, on an elementary level, was widely accessible, the Nupe turned Islam into a means of social mobility. But the result, a religious division cutting irregularly across the society, even across single communities, clearly presented new problems; and their solution took the form of a 'remodelling of the model'. The ('unorthodox') tolerance of Nupe Moslems towards pagans is one such reaction to a cleavage which, if it were allowed to retain its sharpness, would break up every community. Another, though it occurs in one case only, lies in that 'religious division of labour' between Moslems and pagans which we recorded from Kutigi. But consider also that the spreading of Islam must tend to obscure the class barrier which it formerly sustained and on which Nupe society is still based; and if one day Islam sweeps the whole country, that problem will arise with even greater acuteness. To some extent the commonly accepted distinction between grades of mallams tends to preserve or re-establish the class barrier; for the 'knowledge' which makes the 'true' mallam is more readily accessible to the leisured and wealthy than to the craftsman or peasant. However, the full consequences of this conflict are not yet visible. Indeed, we cannot predict if the conflict itself will stay; for extraneous changes (political or economic) may well weaken or remove the class barrier. Yet if it remains, the model of Islam might again show the solution, its sectarianism offering the possibility of diverse and even opposed religious alignments.

So much for the processes of change and 'contact'. As regards that end-state, it has become almost a dogma of many anthropologists that it always represents a unique cultural situation, something in the nature of a *'tertium quid'* which has no precise

[1] This should be taken literally. I found communities still observing the *gunnu*, where the economic co-operation of the large family group had disappeared (e.g. Doko or Mokwa); while in others, which had abandoned the *gunnu*, the old system of inheritance was only beginning to break down (e.g. Lemu).

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

177 antecedents in the 'parent cultures' and invariably amounts to more than a mere 'fusion or mixing'. Rather, 'the clash and interplay of two cultures produce new things'.[1] In cultural changes 'old elements are abandoned and new ones developed in close and constant relation to the existing configuration'.[2] To quote Herskovits' summing up of this school of thought: these scholars hold that 'the arithmetic of culture contact is never a process of addition. . . . A culture of multiple origins is different from any bodies of tradition that have contributed to it. The dynamics of acculturation . . . are creative.'[3] In the terms of our subject matter we should have to admit that Nupe-Islam is not so-and-so much Nupe religion plus so-and-so much Islam but a fundamentally novel phenomenon, unprecedented, integrated, self-contained.

182

Now the processes we outlined, devious, piecemeal, involving partial adjustments and often unstable compromise, make it clear that their end-result is indeed a 'new thing'. Yet equally they suggest that it is not, at any stage, fully integrated or self-contained. Whichever way we understand 'integration', or for that matter its antithesis, the mere 'fusion or mixing', no summary judgment of this kind is possible.

Taken at its most concrete meaning, the integration of a cultural item in a new setting would imply that the respective modes of behaviour are performed regularly and in predictable situations. But clearly there are degrees of this regularity. The Moslem *salla* or the pseudo-Moslem *navũ* represent fully regular, predictable modes of behaviour; so do the Fast of Ramadhan, the daily prayers, and the observance of alms-giving. But Moslem-style divination or medical practices, the Moslem solemnization of kinship events, and the Moslem rules of preferential marriage, are much less regular and predictable. They represent ways of acting which people may or may not choose, having become established only as cultural 'alternatives', to borrow Linton's phrase.[4] The visits to the mosque are even more irregularly observed, while the concern with Islamic mythology or theology is purely sporadic if not exceptional.

Nor is the picture more uniform when we understand 'integration' to mean, more abstractly, a firm fit between the originally alien elements of culture and their new setting. This fit can only be of three kinds: it may be one of purpose, the alien elements exhibiting some rationally intelligible utility or appropriateness in the new setting; or it may be visible in the logical consistency

[1] B. Malinowski, *The Dynamics of Culture Change*, 1945, pp. 21, 25.
[2] R. Linton, *The Study of Man*, 1936, p. 360.
[3] M. J. Herskovits, *Man and his Work*, 1948, p. 534.
[4] Op. cit., p. 273.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

obtaining between the two; or the 'fit' may be psychological, in that the old and new modes of behaviour exhibit the same emotional 'tone' or 'ethos'.[1]

Undoubtedly, there is evidence for the nexus of utility or appropriateness, even though its character varies widely. The great ceremonials of Islam conspicuously serve political interests and the regulation of adolescence; equally they have been fitted into the cycle of routine and recreation. The daily prayers, the fast, and alms-giving have no such momentous part to play; yet precisely because they are inconsequential and depend on private decisions alone, they have come to exemplify adherence to the new creed in a manner both conspicuous and easy to assume. In other words, they serve as distinguishing marks, as badges of Islam, much as do the turban or other suggestive items of dress. Yet worship in the mosque rather than in the open, a flexible system of priestship rather than one based on inheritance or supernatural vocation, or the Moslem variants of marriage in the kindred have no particular utility. Indeed, worship in the village mosque tends to weaken the solidarity of the community which all other features of the social organization aim to uphold; while the inadequacy of the Moslem rules of widow marriage had to be corrected by a remodelling of the funeral customs.[2] Again, the Moslem funeral ceremonial fails to express the important social distinction between old age and youth.[3] And the muddled pseudo-Islamic mythology is surely nothing but an incongruous, valueless 'addition'. All we can say about the appropriateness of these novel practices is that they conform to the rules of Islam; which is only repeating that Islam has in fact been adopted, with all these features, whether they have an ulterior purposefulness or not.

Logical consistency, even the interest in simulating it, is widely absent: think of the employment, by the Mohammedan sovereigns, of the *ndakó gboyá* cult; of the *navũ* performed without any notion of or, for that matter, curiosity about the meaning of this ritual of fire; or of the preservation of the pagan marriages between grandmother and grandson by people otherwise consciously committed to Moslem practice.

Only on the plane of psychological effects is there a close and indeed convincing 'fit', the result, quite clearly, of selection and remodelling. Thus the mystic and ecstatic observances of Islam are absent; and the hectic, sexually excited mood of the *gani* or *navũ* merely duplicates the mood formerly evoked in the *gunnu*. Integration, then, is complete only where it bears on the ethos of

[1] For the theoretical basis of this argument see my *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, 1951, pp. 384–5 *et seq.*

[2] See above, p. 122.

[3] See above, pp. 129–30.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

Nupe religion; but integration here means persistence, so that in the one instance in which the adoption of the new creed is truly not a mere 'addition' it also ceases to be a 'new thing'.

It is hardly surprising that this 'fit' should apply to the emotional 'tone' of religion and should prove the tenacity of predispositions so deeply rooted in the personality. Even so, there can be no finality about it; this is only the picture as we see it today, and it is possible that further developments, or strains only slowly gathering weight, will bring a change here also. In a previous chapter I ventured a prediction of this kind.[1] Let me now add that traces of such a change are already visible. For the *navũ* is more violent than the *gunnu* or any traditional rite used to be, and focuses its violence more sharply. Also, it was left to the new ceremonial to embody the 'licensed liberties' of joking relationship, which are otherwise played out privately and sporadically. As we remember, they are enacted mainly between the sexes and between boys and older men, and hence set aside respect, relationships and rules of etiquette normally scrupulously observed. Thus publicly staged, the 'licensed liberties' clearly provide a gratification sharper and more consciously aggressive than traditional usage could have afforded. Here, then, the greater political tensions in the city and the greater strain set up by changing moral standards seem to demand this more explosive relief: certainly, the older 'ethos' would not have condoned it.

[1] See above, p. 226.

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

Conclusions. We may say then, in conclusion, that economic co-operation and community life only underline the political and tribal divisions which cut across Kede society. As integrative forces which could foster a solidarity pertaining to the political system at large, they fail. Only the ideological influences, myth and religion, succeed in this. They anchor the external political unit in more deeply rooted interests and sentiments. They add to political coercion the more subtle persuasion of supernatural arguments, of beliefs in the necessity and fore-ordination of the existing system.

I have been using the present tense with some liberty. It was applied correctly if we are thinking of the last ten or fifteen years, but inaccurately if we consider the immediate present and, above all, the future. The rite of the *Chain of Tsoede* is still performed annually, in completely Mohammedanized Muregi. The bull sacrifice at the *Ketsá* was performed when the present *Kuta* succeeded to the chieftainship; whether it will be repeated for his successor is open to doubt. The *Ndáduma*, at any rate, although still existing as a local rite, is no longer carried out by the Kede chief. We have spoken before of the decline of authority of the Kede chief. It may seem surprising that a chieftainship which had been forced to give up most of the qualities from which it formerly drew its strength should so easily discard these 'binding forces' of religion. The explanation lies, again, in the changed conception of Kede chieftainship. Kede rule has exchanged its dynamic and expanding nature for the secure, aquiescent authority under the Pax Britannica. It can dispense with the binding forces of religion, which used to uphold the autocratic rulership of a small minority; it can, above all, afford to discontinue a practice which, to the Mohammedan chiefs of Kede country, appears as a concession to their less enlightened subjects. Kede rule has thus paradoxically weakened itself in its new-found security. And in this the chiefs of Kede do not stand alone; this paradox is, I believe, a not uncommon feature of modern, static, Government-backed chieftainship in Africa.

The incipient dissolution of the 'binding force' of religion in the Kede State is only following in the wake of the general dissolution of the solidarity which it was meant to uphold. The economic development of the country led, as we have seen, to an extensive co-operation with outside groups and to the founding of colonies

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

in areas to which political rule could never be expected to follow. Common interests and culture, community life, intermarriage stretch as far as these outposts. Moreover, cultural assimilation and intensified contact have removed some of the barriers which formerly separated the Kede from neighbouring groups. The facts of common culture, economic co-operation, and community life thus no longer converge to cement the solidarity of a ruling group, but merely outline the much vaguer unit of a scattered ethnic group which has abandoned all claims to political self-realization.

IX. The Evolution of the Kede State

Our examination of the Kede State and its history does neither support nor refute the theory of the origin of the State which, accepted to-day by many students of society, derives every State organization from an original invasion and eventual conquest of one ethnic group by another.[1] Our data have shown political domination of one ethnic group by another to be a factor of paramount importance; they also revealed the occurrence of clash and conquest—though not on the comprehensive scale implied in this theory of the State; but they do not prove an original group invasion, beyond that which we must relegate to the era of mythical and thus unverifiable events. Our data can, in fact, also be taken as evidence for an 'internal diversification'[2] and a gradual emergence to political supremacy of one out of a number of ethnic groups.

Our data relating to Kede expansion in recent times, on the other hand, tend to confirm another sociological theory which concerns itself with social origins—namely, the theory which holds that migration and colonization are never a result of over-population, but rather an expression of that 'spirit of hope' and 'enterprise' which is absent in countries with over-population.[3] Can we accept this description of the growing Kede society as a final statement? Is the emergence of a tribal section to a dominant political role fully explained by this reference to psychological characteristics?

Our analysis of Kede political organization has emphasized a somewhat different aspect; it outlined the political system in its

[1] See F. Oppenheimer, op. cit.
[2] R. Lowie, op. cit., p. 40.
[3] A. M. Carr-Saunders, *The Population Problem* (1922), pp. 299 ff.

6: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1956
FF52 Nupe FF52
Bida

Crafts of Bida

323
177

IT is something of a shock to find that the traditional glass-making families of Bida, whilst working very much as they always have worked in their own quarter of the town, are now using beer bottles as their raw material. They melt the green and brown bottles from Britain, Denmark, Germany and Holland in the same wood-burning, hand-blown furnaces in which they used to make their own glass "from local sands and stones with a little ash". The romance has been damaged and some interesting technology will soon have been lost; but from the worker's point of view, the change can only be for the better.

326
177

The brass-workers too are finding their materials among "European" scrap, and aluminium is creeping in as the metal for some of the cheaper lines. Yet once the Nupe blacksmiths' groups smelted their own iron in charcoal-fired blast furnaces, force-fed by hand bellows, from ore quarried in the sugarloaf hills which stand up abruptly from the plain around Bida.

326

Once, these smiths fashioned the weapons for the raiding parties which, less than one hundred years ago, were able to terrorise both sides of the Niger valley from above Jebba to below the confluence of the Benue.

These military activities were, it seems, the main cause of a system of craft guilds in Bida which appears to have been as complete as any known in mediaeval Europe. Every aspect of production and supply appears to have been strictly controlled by the state to meet the state's requirements. The guilds of craftsmen in iron, leather, and embroidery

[Text continues on p. 141 -- Analyst]

326
415

Nigeria: Pottery. **Nicholson.**

Bida (Nupe) Pottery. *By W. E. Nicholson.*

These notes refer to one only of the groups of potters in Bida, Niger Province, and the actual workers observed belong to Augi's house in the Quarter of Natsu.

I. *Workers.*—All the operators are women. The family came originally from Sokoto, but the mother of the present potters is said to have learnt the trade from a Yoruba woman, *i.e.*, the technique may be Yoruba or Nupe in origin. All are Mohammedans, so that the survival of tabus, etc., in the craft is not to be expected, and no trace of them was found.

Two varieties of article are made:—

(i) Small water jug, chiefly used for ablutionary purposes, called in Nupe *Musuge* (equivalent to the Hausa *Buta* or *Shantuli*—Man, 1929, 34).

(ii) A larger water-container called in Nupe *Dukã-agbã* (equivalent to the Hausa *Pukunya*—Man 1931, 186).

The following notes refer to the former only of these.

II. *Preparation of the Clay.*—Suitable clay is found in the swamps of the Gbako river at Badeggi, about 10 miles east of Bida. Itinerant vendors from this village bring it round for sale, and it costs about 10d. per cwt. During part of the rainy season floods prevent its collection. The clay is pounded to powder in a wooden mortar identical with that used in the preparation of food. It is levigated—

(i) Usually by the addition of powdered potsherds: this powder is sifted before being added to the clay, through a sieve made of slivers of bamboo.

(ii) Sometimes native bricks of sun-dried mud are burnt and powdered and used instead of potsherds.

After the addition of the levigating material the clay is wetted until it attains the right consistency.

III. *Building of the Pot.*—(*a*) Old cloths are spread on the ground and the operator places in front of herself a flat sand-stone slab about 1 inch thick; it is said that these stones are purchased from the Bead-makers and that they come from further south in Ilorin country; they are 'natural,' *i.e.*, pieces of stratified rock which splits into suitable thicknesses; the slab is well dusted with powdered potsherds to prevent sticking. A ball of clay (*a* (i)) is placed on the slab, manipulated into a 'pancake' (*a* (ii)) and beaten out thin with a stone hand-beater; any

9:Nadel E-5 (1934-1935) 1935 FF52 Nupe FF52

sphere of influence of the *ledu*-organization, death penalty was executed, though in secrecy, by the people of the village themselves. But however this be, the actual issue is little affected. For even if there had existed this strong superstitious belief, the problem for us here is that it should be made use of in such a special way. The belief, the sentiments expressed in the belief, and the political institution in which they crystalline, are two entirely different things. The political system of Nupe kingdom, creating the *ledu*-organization, might actually only have adopted existing motives and ideas; but then it lent its own most sacred symbolism to their support, and at the same time formed out of their psychological appeal a rigid judicial monopoly, and a political office which almost comes to deny its origin: for the office of the *ledu* includes as we have seen also cases which have nothing more to do with death, namely the flogging of those who abused the name of the king; and ordinary flogging was done in every Nupe village.

693

III.

More than a hundred years of Mohammedan law, decades of civil war and political changes, were not powerful enough to break the spiritual influence of the *ledu* institution, the belief in its ordeals, and the sacredness of its office. But they have been able to obliterate certain details of its organization. One point in particular it is difficult to ascertain to-day: who was actually entitled to make use of the organization of 'Tsoede's hangmen'?

177 693

I found two different, and conflicting, interpretations. According to the first, the power of the *ledu* was limited to the river, and the authority over the *ledu* was, from Tsoede's time almost up till now, given into the hands of the chief of one section among the Nupe, the Kyedya. The people who call themselves Kyedya are the most powerful among the riverain Nupe. They are the canoe- and fishermen on the main river; they monopolize river traffic and trade, they look down upon their neighbours, and style themselves the 'Lords of the Waters.' They are united in a very strongly centralized political organization, and their head is the chief of Muregi, who holds the ancient hereditary title of *kuta*. The *kuta*, then, is said to be the legitimate head of the ledu organization. But a second version says that the office of the *ledu* comprised the whole country (or at least stretched inland as well), and that the power over the *ledu* belonged exclusively to the *etsu*, or kings, of the Nupe —the kings who were till the Fulani conquest the direct descendants of Tsoede.

174 105 693 631

Weighing evidence against evidence, the situation seems to be this:—Originally an organization of the Nupe king the *ledu* system was adopted later by the Kyedya. In the beginning the Nupe king alone was entitled to act through the *ledu* organization. Geographical and historical facts, reflected in the mythology of their ancestor-king, account for the connection with the river area: the territory of the young Nupe kingdom were the river banks. The river Niger, *nddduma*, as the Nupe call it, 'Father Niger,' marks the path of the mythical Tsoede where he set out to unite the Nupe into a powerful kingdom. Even later, in historical times, when the Nupe state extended far across central Nigeria, the capitals always remained near the river: Gbara, Jima, Mokwa and Raba.[4] But also economically the Niger was the life centre of the country. The welfare of a large section of the population depended on the river. And traffic and trade, so immensely important in Nupe culture, were bound up with the Niger. What appears, then, in the context of myth as the path of the ancestor-king of Nupe, plays in the actual tribal life the rôle of a 'King's Highway,' of a vital artery of the political and economic organism over which the king extends his own special, sacred authority. Violation of the law in this area means the violation of this sacredness; and crimes committed here became crimes of a special sort, subject to a special jurisdiction which has the meaning more of a sacred vengeance than of an ordinary punishment.

174 693 631 [361] [487]

When, however, during the Fulani wars the political centre moved away from the river, finally to Bida, the present capital of Nupe, the original organization of the *ledu* must have lost force and significance. And then it was, as our evidence points out, that the Kyedya claimed the title over the *ledu*. The power over the river was now theirs, unquestioned. The Kyedya, hostile to the Fulani invaders, always boasting with their ancient lordship over the waters, and regarding themselves still in the days of British rule as equal to the king of Bida, seized this organization which seemed a

[4] *See* the map in my article on *Nupe State and Community* (AFRICA, VIII, 3).